
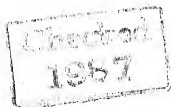


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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE second part of this book is an enlargement of a series of five B.B.C. Talks which I gave in the summer of 1935.

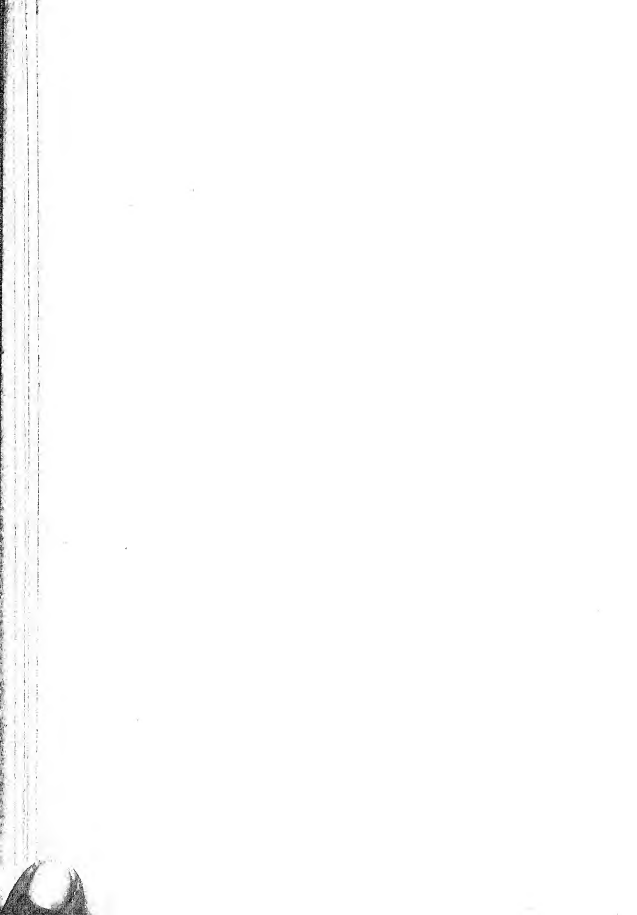
I am taking this opportunity of thanking the several friends who have helped me both with their suggestions and criticism.

KENNETH INGRAM

*October 1935*

PART ONE

*Will it be Capitalist?*



## CHAPTER I

### *Signs of Upheaval*

THERE is no more significant element in English life than 'middle opinion'. Middle opinion may be described as the outlook of those men and women who do not actively associate themselves with causes and organizations. They are not normally excited by political enthusiasms. They do not wear black shirts or red ties. Their interests are absorbed in their homes, their love-affairs, their business, their hobbies and recreations. In contrast with the devotees of Socialism, Fascism, or other institutional groups, they are often regarded as non-'politically conscious'. This, however, is not altogether an accurate diagnosis.

The significance of middle opinion is its extent. It is the outlook of the majority of men and women in this country. In general elections it gives the casting vote and determines the issue. It is possible that a minority may seize power and carry out some violent and radical change; but, if middle opinion is sufficiently aroused to oppose the change, the minority will almost certainly be defeated. Middle opinion is therefore a factor with which both the reformer and the revolutionist must reckon. Only if it has been converted, or is too apathetic or divided to interpose, can the innovator hope for ultimate success.

## *The Coming Civilization*

It is important to examine the trend of middle opinion sympathies, so as to estimate the attitude it is likely to adopt, if we are to attempt to form any view as to future developments in this country. Middle opinion is heterogeneous: it cannot be formalized as an exact creed. But it possesses certain common features which usually determine its standpoint in regard to major issues.

Middle opinion is conservatively minded. It instinctively resents change. This is not difficult to understand when we remember that the men and women whose outlook it represents are primarily interested in their domestic and social concerns. They ask only to be left in peace. They do not want wars or drastic unsettlement. Life brings enough anxieties and problems already, so that they have no desire to be involved in troubles which are deliberately created. Economic conditions may be far from satisfactory, work may be hard to obtain, and insecure when obtained; but it is better to put up with the existing system than embark on uncertain experiments which may produce even less agreeable conditions. Thus, middle opinion was easily mobilized against the revolutionary implications of the General Strike. It rallied to the support of the National Party in the financial crisis. It voted against war through the League of Nations Union.

Middle opinion, therefore, is not entirely devoid of political consciousness. It can be aroused to

## *Signs of Upheaval*

expression over certain political and social issues. It is indifferent towards the normal political controversies, but it can become indignant over cases of extreme injustice. It was not so committed to National Party allegiance as to support the Government policy regarding the revised scales of unemployment relief. We live in an age of wireless and newspapers, moreover, when, however removed we may be from public affairs, we are continually reminded of the problems of the larger world. Yet most men and women form their opinions as to these problems second-hand: they are necessarily affected by the views of the set in which they happen to move. They rarely converse with those who hold, nor do they read books which advocate, an unfamiliar standpoint. Their environment is temperamentally conservative.

The older people who make up this large section of the public ask to be left alone: they prefer to accept existing conditions in the hope that they may become more settled. The younger generations are less traditionally minded, but in the main they are anxious to obtain as much pleasure as possible out of life, and many of them are inclined to resent social upheaval as likely to restrict their opportunities for pleasure.

### *The Present Unsettlement*

Nevertheless, the most casual observer has become uncomfortably aware that he is living in a highly

## *The Coming Civilization*

unsettled period of history. That sweeping changes are likely to occur in this country, as well as elsewhere, is no longer the prophecy merely of the blood-and-thunder alarmist. Sober and sane people have begun to reckon with the possibility of another world war, of a world crash, or of a social revolution. We are no longer basking in the placid atmosphere of the Victorian Age. And most men and women, therefore, even though they are normally unaroused by political appeals, realize that it is advisable for them to equip themselves with information as to the causes which are producing the present unrest, to form some idea as to what is likely to be the remedy, and to make up their minds as to what they ought to do about it. It is a moment when the policy of drift and the attitude of lethargy are peculiarly inappropriate.

Let us take a brief glance at some of the symptoms which suggest that the world is suffering from an acute disease.

1. *There are some two million unemployed in this country.*

This figure fluctuates slightly, but we know now that unemployment on a vast scale has come to be regarded as a permanent phenomenon. This means that our economic system—whether it is the fault of the system itself, or the conditions which it is up against, we will consider later—cannot provide work for millions of able-bodied men and women.

## *Signs of Upheaval*

2. *Many industries are derelict: many others are in a precarious condition.*

It is hardly necessary to pause here to give examples in support of this statement: a glance at the derelict cotton-mills of Lancashire,\* the fleet of abandoned shipping in most of our harbours, and the plight of the Durham and South Wales coal-mines ought to be sufficient proof that we have drifted far away from the Victorian days of British prosperity.

But it is necessary to consider at this point the claim which is sometimes advanced that we have already turned the corner and are slowly climbing back to prosperity.

The answer is simple. There may be a turn of the tide, but the tide will not carry us back to that state of prosperity which Great Britain once enjoyed. Those conditions were mainly due to the fact that in many industries British manufacturers had a complete monopoly: most of the world was their undisputed market. Foreign nations wanted our coal, our cotton, and our heavy manufactures, and our shipping carried the goods they required as well as the food or raw material with which the foreigner paid for our exports. In certain industries there has been actual expansion since the war. But the

\* The census returns for 1931 show that 66,000 fewer textile workers, 41,000 fewer metal workers, and 25,000 fewer coal-miners were being employed in 1931 in Lancashire than in 1921.



## *The Coming Civilization*

Victorian type of prosperity cannot be reproduced. Almost all civilized countries, including the British Dominions, have themselves become industrialized. The unchallenged foreign demand for our manufactures has passed for ever.

3. *Every country is raising tariff walls and aiming at increasing its exports while decreasing its imports.*

The world, in fact, presents the spectacle of a number of barricades. Since the foreign market is so fiercely competitive, the aim of each country is to be as self-supporting as possible.

Free-trade Britain has since 1932 adopted the same policy. We have become a 'protective' country. We are urged to 'buy British'. Some people, like Lord Beaverbrook, dream of an entirely self-supporting British Empire.

This policy is usually called 'economic nationalism'. Not only is it true that the international exchange of goods has decreased to an amazing extent since—say, 1929—but the export of surplus capital has similarly decreased. 'Lending abroad' is now heavily discouraged. America was exporting capital heavily from 1923 to 1928. France, it is true, continued to export to her own Empire and to certain small dependent countries in Central and Eastern Europe, but to nothing like her actual capacity. But it is generally true to say that capital is not now invested abroad because world conditions are too unstable.

### *Signs of Upheaval*

Now, this fierce national competition, these barriers against the exchange of goods, do not make for peace. The present order cannot be a healthy condition. Almost every economist agrees that the recent crisis was accentuated by this economic nationalism, by the drying up, that is, of the international exchange of goods and the fact that surplus capital is not moving.

4. *It is an age of plenty, but many people are in dire want.*

This statement has been so often repeated that there is again no need to give detailed examples. It has been one of the queerest symptoms of the depression that, whereas on the one hand food and certain goods have been destroyed because prices have fallen so heavily that they would sell at a loss, in many quarters of the world people have been starving for want of these very goods. In China and Japan there has been actual famine. In many of our own industrial towns children and their mothers are under-fed.

Modern machinery is capable of turning out goods to an extent undreamed of by our ancestors, but the producers have been destroying their products. They have done this, not because there is over-production and everyone has enough already; they have done so in spite of the fact that millions of people want the goods and cannot get them.

It seems quite a crazy situation. There are ex-

planations, but we will not consider them now. All that at the moment is necessary is to note that this is another symptom that something is seriously wrong with the world.

5. *Nations have begun to re-arm, and the threat of war has become once more uncomfortably real.*

This is a symptom which has a close connexion with the conditions which we have just been mentioning. As we shall see presently, it is the inevitable result of the present economic policy.

There is no need to enter into the controversy as to whether armament or disarmament is the surer protection against war. All we need to do is to note that the hope of making the world safe for humanity, which we thought we had begun to realize after 1919, is beginning to grow dim. We are back to-day in a position which in many respects resembles that of 1914. The world is once more becoming an armed camp, and not at all the kind of camp which augurs well for peace. It is arming because it is afraid, and fear has always been the chief cause of war. There are several danger-spots in Europe and Asia, and we do not need to be expert in international politics to realize where they are.

A world war would plunge us into chaos. We have learnt a bitter lesson as to the effects of the last war. Imagine the upheaval which a second world-war would cause!

Since 1919 the science of aeroplane craft has

## *Signs of Upheaval*

advanced rapidly. A second war will inevitably be fought much more in the air than the last, and therefore large armies and navies will not offer the protection which they once afforded.

Chemistry has also made advances, and an extermination of civilian populations will be an inevitable feature of another war. Moreover, civilian cities will be the immediate target of the enemy bombers.

Militarist as well as pacifist must therefore admit that another world war would be a catastrophe. It makes no difference whether we regard war as an unnecessary form of madness, or whether we believe that it is a form of recreation in which mankind may be expected to indulge from time to time. The fact remains that another war will be such a disaster that we must attempt to avoid it—not because we are cowards or degenerates, but because civilization will be plunged into chaos if we do not preserve peace.

A war in which we were not engaged would not leave us unaffected. Neutral countries in the last war have not escaped intense economic troubles. We should not escape a post-war economic unsettlement merely because we stood by and watched other nations fighting.

6. *An attempt to introduce revolutionary social changes in this country will be made in the next few years.*

This is the last of the symptoms of which we must take note, and it is perhaps the most direct indica-

tion that we cannot expect to drift back into the calm weather of the nineteenth century.

The official Opposition and therefore the most probable alternative to the National Government is the Labour Party. That Party has undergone some transformation since it lost office in 1931. It consists of various grades of political opinion, from a right-wing colouring which approximates to Liberalism, to a left-wing, full-blooded Socialism. There is little doubt that the left-wing influence is stronger than before. As a whole the Labour Party has moved left. It will never again accept office without a working majority, and equally it will refuse to confine itself to the line of policy to which it was committed under Mr. MacDonald. The next Labour Government is pledged to attempt to introduce the first principles of a Socialist order—a revolutionary change, that is to say, of our present system. Moreover, it has been spending its years of exile in working out the details of this programme. Its plans are in theory complete.

It may be argued that middle opinion will never give its vote to a professedly Socialist party, and that the constituency of Labour is not numerically strong enough to ensure the return of a Labour Government. But there are several considerations which throw doubt on the accuracy of this calculation. Economic unsettlement, for instance, may become so intensified that middle opinion becomes persuaded as to the need for radical change and willing to give Socialism a trial. It is interesting, indeed, to notice

the development of the popular attitude towards Socialism during the last two decades. Twenty years ago the majority regarded Socialism with contempt or horror, but they considered it to be beyond the horizon of realities. To-day they may still suspect it, but they have begun to reckon with it as a serious proposition. They no longer dismiss it as the theory of a few cranks. In any discussion on social problems the question of Socialism is found to enter in as an alternative to the present order which must be regarded as a probable contingency.

In any case, political history shows that an Opposition cannot be excluded continuously from office. A long period may elapse during which one party is returned successively to power. But eventually the tide turns.

When this happens—and it may happen sooner than some people care to contemplate—certain consequences appear to be inevitable. We have seen that the Labour Government will at once embark on a Socialist programme. This will excite strenuous opposition from those vested interests whose privileges will thereby be threatened. The City, the industrial magnates, 'big business' are unlikely to acquiesce in legislation which will imperil their position. The House of Lords will become the first line of their defence, and a constitutional struggle must almost certainly be provoked.

We are not called upon at this point to take sides as to whether Socialism would be a disaster or a

blessing. All we need do is to note that the official Opposition will be pledged to introduce Socialism, that the Opposition will one day come into power, and that, when it makes the attempt, there are powerful influences which will put up a strong fight against it.

That might mean physical violence. But even if the struggle takes a peaceful form, it will not consist merely of a number of parliamentary debates. Such a struggle will affect the whole nation, and every citizen will be involved in it. It is worth while, therefore, as in the case of the other signs of unsettlement, to make up our minds as to what we believe is the right course to take, and what we consider is the cure for the world's present and future troubles.

We have taken a preliminary survey. Now let us examine the position a little more closely.

*From Feudalism to Capitalism*

A LARGE number of people take it for granted that the present order of society is the only form which an advanced civilization could assume. They have been born and bred in what is called the *capitalist* system, and it never occurs to them that there might be a society in which there were no rich or poor classes, no owners of big estates, and no prosperous financial magnates; or else, if they admit that the present order of society could be changed, they instantly condemn such a change because they regard the present system as a law of nature, with which it would be madness or sacrilege to tamper.

It is, however, a symptom of elementary simple-mindedness to have so limited an imagination that you cannot lift yourself in mind above your immediate environment, so as to see that the order in which you happen to live may give place to an entirely different order. I once met with an extreme form of this simple-mindedness in a Russian peasant woman who did not know, and would not believe, that there was any other country in the world besides Russia. It is only a little less simple-minded to suppose that there can be no other social order than that under which land is owned by individuals or businesses are conducted in the form of limited companies.



As a matter of fact it is highly improbable, in any event, that the present social order will continue. It is highly improbable because it is a law of nature that the world never ceases to grow and change. The capitalist system is one stage in a chain of changes; it is unlikely that the world will halt at the particular economic development which it happens to have reached in the twentieth century. It is as unlikely that the world will stand still at the point we call the capitalist order as that time itself will stand still. The capitalist system is bound in the ordinary course of nature to develop into something else, and it is for us to inquire what the next stage is likely to be, as well as to play our part in trying to make the next stage a better one than the present.

When we encounter these unimaginative people and find it necessary to convince them that the present social order is not the final word in creation, it may be well first to ask them to glance back at history, to the history of our own nation. It will then be possible to point out that the capitalist system is a comparatively modern development, and that because it did not always exist in the past it is reasonable to suppose that it will not always exist in the future.

### *The Feudal System*

An earlier stage of our English society was what we call Feudalism. Feudalism in its broader and

## *From Feudalism to Capitalism*

less technical sense is the form which society has frequently taken in European development where there is a peasant community and the standard of life is still in a primitive condition. Until the 1917 Revolution Russia was mainly a feudalist country. Under Feudalism the population is usually sparse and the means of transport is so bad that each locality is comparatively self-supporting. The outstanding feature of a feudal society is that peasants work at the same things. Each man produces his own food, most of his own clothes, and builds his own house. There is no exchange of goods in open market, because there is too little transport to make a market feasible.

In feudal England the peasant produced food for himself and food for his lord, to whom he belonged. When required he would have to fight for his lord. The lord was bound to render certain services to an over-lord, for Feudalism was an elaborate set of relationships, which there is no need for us to examine. All we should note is that in Feudalism all peasants produce the same things; and, secondly, that the peasant produces them himself—that is to say, they are hand-made. He and his family are the productive unit, and he is the property of his lord.

### *Social Changes under Capitalism*

Neither the disappearance of feudal civilization nor the eventual emergence of capitalist civilization took place suddenly. The two systems for a long

while overlapped, or, rather, the capitalist system was forming within the womb of the earlier economic order. As far back as the fifteenth century in England the market had begun to appear. But though it is impossible to put an exact date to the overthrow of Feudalism, we know that what is called the Industrial Revolution gave an enormous impetus to Capitalism, for it opened up entirely new methods of producing goods rapidly and cheaply. It substituted the steam train for the slow lumbering horse-drawn transport, and the steamer for the sailing-ship. Goods ceased to be individually hand-made; the factory became the unit.

It may be worth while to consider for a moment the vast social changes which the coming of Capitalism involved. It meant the overthrow of the reign of feudal aristocracy: political power passed into the hands of the trading middle class, and most of the aristocracy became traders and therefore were merged in the middle class. It meant the building of big cities and the drift of the community from the land to the factory. Many people who have seen the horror of slum life and remember the appalling conditions of factory labour in the earlier stages of Capitalism look back on the old feudal system with sentimental regret, especially when they see how the English countryside has been despoiled by the hideous invasion of industrial machinery. Yet it is doubtful whether the conditions of the peasant under Feudalism were not worse than those of the

sweated labourer under industrial Capitalism. The peasant was a serf, a chattel in the hands of his lord, rather than a human being. These historical comparisons, however, are not of much value, for it is as unlikely that society will go back to Feudalism as that we shall be able to force ourselves back into our teens.

*The Worker's Wage and its Value*

Under Feudalism the peasant labourer produced food directly for himself and his family, as well as surplus food for his lord. But under Capitalism the labourer does not produce directly for himself. He becomes one hand in a mass of workers and is paid wages in return for his work.

The first thing to notice is that his wage is less in value than the value of what his work realizes on the market. A workman works upon certain materials in order to create a value for them on the market. But he is not paid the full amount of this value, for the employer has bought, not the workmen, as in a slave system, but the workmen's services. The workman produces more than is needed for his own maintenance—that is to say, the value of what he produces is more than his wage. There must be a proportional profit made on his share of product, since otherwise the business cannot carry on. The employer must make his profit, the landlord must draw his rent, and the money-lenders (shareholders) must draw their interest. The work-

man must therefore produce not only the value of his own wage but also the surplus value which goes to pay overhead charges and profits.

It may be argued that it is only right that the owner should receive a profit from the results of the work done in his factory because, even if he has not himself worked as organizer or inventor, he has lent the money and made it possible for the factory to be run. Equally it will be said that the shareholders should be paid for lending their money and the landlord for lending his land. We are not, however, at this stage considering the rights or wrongs of the capitalist system: we are merely considering what it is. And we see that it is a system under which, in addition to the costs of production, the people who have lent money and land, etc., must receive an interest-share in the price obtained. Various people, in fact, must be rewarded, and the price must carry these additional charges. This is the direct result of money and land being in private hands.

*How does Capitalism obtain the Services of the Workers?*

How, then, were the workers induced to sell their labour for a lower rate than the full value of what they produced? The main reason is that the workers possessed neither the tools by which the production was carried out, nor did they have free access to the tools. The machinery was owned absolutely by the middle-class employer. The individual worker

could not compete against the owner of the machine-run factory by making the articles with his own hands. Also, it must be remembered that his real wages would be higher if he were working in a large-scale producing firm than in a little business of his own. There was every inducement, therefore, for him to come in and work for the employer on the employer's terms.

Bigger amounts of capital will always accumulate faster than smaller amounts, because the owners of these bigger amounts will be able to produce goods more cheaply and more quickly than the owner of the smaller amount of capital. The economic effect of Capitalism was therefore to create an 'upper' class owning and in control of the means of production, and contributing to a combination of large capital investment; and a 'lower' class absolutely dependent for employment upon the owning class.

### *The Open Market*

The other feature of Capitalism which we must consider is that it depended on the principle of the free or open market. It struggled hard against the monopolies of Feudalism in order to create the open market. By the middle of the nineteenth century Great Britain was looking on the whole world as a possible open market, and we cannot read the Free Trade Liberal prophets of that period without being impressed by their extreme optimism. This Liberal

gospel meant that there must be a complete freedom of exchange between individuals in all nations. This was the middle-class interpretation of Liberty, Freedom and Equality, which the revolutionaries of the previous century had proclaimed as their watchwords.

"In this way", said the Free Trade Liberals, "the world will be made happy for mankind. Every man will be free to produce what he likes, and the law of supply and demand will see to it that there is no wastage of product in the long run. The consumer will be able to live cheaply, for here again the law of supply and demand will operate. Manufacturers who over-charge for their goods will not find a demand and will be driven to lower their prices. Similarly, if too many of the same kind of goods are being produced, the price of them will fall because there will be no sufficient demand, and an unwanted surplus will cease to be supplied."

A number of consequences follow from this system of free-trade Capitalism, but, as this is not an exhaustive economic treatise, we must choose only those two features which most closely concern us.

### *Competition*

The first of these is that Capitalism meant competition. A free market really means free competition. By competition the bad goods, the overcharged goods, the unnecessary goods will be weeded out.

In the competitive struggle the right man, it was said, would beat his rivals. Moreover, it was urged that competition would stimulate efficiency and initiative. If a man has to struggle against a number of others, he will have to use his full capacities if he is going to win. Conditions tend to become unsatisfactory where the consumer is at the mercy of one producer. The people who lived in Kent, and used to lament the unpunctuality of South Eastern and Chatham trains, attributed their misfortune to the fact that no other railway company had invaded their territory. Where you had monopoly you inevitably had abuse. But if the free market was extended you would have the best service at the cheapest rates.

This doctrine of the need of competition was the main argument against Socialism, for it was essential to a competitive system that businesses should be in private hands. A State-owned business means a monopoly: or, if there are private businesses in competition against a State concern, it means an unfair competition, since the State concern can be subsidized out of the taxes, whereas the private businesses have to depend on their own resources.

### *Profit-making*

Secondly, we must remember that Capitalism is essentially a profit-making system, and this, as we have seen, involves an increased number of charges which the price of the products has to bear. In



addition to the payment of labour and the ordinary overhead charges incurred in production, the investor must be rewarded for lending his money and the landlord for lending his land. The owner must also make his profits, and profit is accordingly the primary aim of a capitalist industry. It is quite true that this involves satisfying the consumer, for, if the consumer is not satisfied, he will not buy and no profit will be made. But to supply the consumer is a secondary aim, and it is often possible to induce him to buy at a price which is high enough to cover a big profit for all the interests concerned.

The most significant feature of a profit-making, privately owned industry is that each owner or group of owners is thinking chiefly of his own profits. It does not matter if other industries are damaged in the process so long as there are no repercussions on himself. There is no inducement, in fact, for industry as a whole to collaborate in a policy which, while good for general interests, involves a restriction of profit-making for individual firms. The owners of these firms will resent such a policy, precisely because they are thinking primarily of their own profits. That is why recovery from a depression is seriously obstructed under the capitalist system.

*Capitalism is Necessarily a Class System*

Capitalism is a system under which society tends to be divided sharply into two classes. The first or

upper class owns the sources of supply, the machinery, the land, the money-capital; the second or lower class depends on the upper class for its employment, and, having no money apart from wages, is destitute if unemployed, or must be provided for by charity or by the State.

A large proportion of society, however, derives income from occupations which depend mainly on individual effort. It is this section of the community from which is recruited what we have elsewhere described as middle opinion. In such professions as the law or medicine, for instance, the individual employs himself (although the system of employer and employee is reproduced even here: the barrister has his clerk and the doctor his assistant or secretary).

The professions, however, are still largely a preserve for the upper class, which alone can afford the education necessary for a professional career. Only in exceptional cases, where he has been able to obtain a scholarship, can a child of the lower classes enter the professions. Education, in fact, which is the key to the professional type of work, is itself affected by the two-class system: the public schools cater for the upper wing of the upper class, and various types of secondary schools for the lower wing, while the lower class is mainly educated in elementary State schools.

There are also certain trade occupations in which a man may be his own employer, such as the small retail shop. But the tendency, as we shall see

presently, is against the one-man trade. The bigger organizations, once they begin to encroach on his locality, are able to crush out the small tradesman by the superior services which they can offer to the public.

It will be seen, therefore, that Capitalism is a class system in which one class has the money and the control, and the other class is wage-earning and dependent. At certain points the two classes overlap: the clerk who is an employee of a firm may have saved money and have become a shareholder, or he may own a small house, and thus in a sense have become a member of the propertied class. It is also true that capitalist society does not consist merely of the very rich and the very poor; there are, on the contrary, an infinite number of grades between the wealthy and the destitute. Moreover, there are some cases in which upper-class people, who live on invested money, are poor, while some skilled labourers who are living entirely on the wages they earn—and therefore fall under the head of 'lower class'—are comparatively well off.

Very often the upper class has been extremely considerate to its employees. A good employer provides for the comfort and recreation of his workers, and, if he can afford to do so, pays them high wages. He will see that they are well attended to when they are ill, and pensioned off when they are too old to work; he may even provide for their dependants. The upper class through the Liberal—

and in some instances through the Conservative—Party has passed laws allowing greater powers of bargaining to the lower classes, and has introduced various measures of what is known as 'social reform'. The upper class is taxed to provide for some of the more immediate wants of the lower class, such as free education and relief of the destitute. The lower class has also been able to secure for itself through the Trades Unions a minimum rate of pay and certain conditions of labour.

There are still many people who believe that Capitalism can continue to provide for a progressive advance in the standard of living by this same Liberal policy. They advocate an intelligent and gradual extension of social reform which is to be paid for, as now, by taxation; and they argue that, if this is done, there is no need for a new form of economic civilization. The answer is that it cannot be done. There is a limit to taxation. The rich can be bled too far. The Nationalist Government in 1932-33 had to lower the standard of living and economize over social reform, because it could not afford to do otherwise. Capitalism, in other words, has reached a stage when it no longer possesses the capacity to provide the funds for a Liberal policy.

And, however brightly this side of the picture may be painted—so far as the lower class is concerned—it does not refute the fact that Capitalism means a class system, a system under which one class is dependent on the other, and a system under which

## *The Coming Civilization*

the other class controls the situation because it owns the means of production. It owns the land, it owns the business and the machinery. Once you place land and business, as in Capitalism, under private ownership, a sharply divided class system is the result. And whatever benefits the lower class enjoys, it is in a quite subordinate position; for the possession of the land, the machinery, and the money (capital) by which business is run is in the hands of its masters.

If, in short, the sources of production are in private hands, that creates a propertied class and a dependent class. And, as we know, the class system enters into our education, our social life, and our very ideas of life. It is one of the main features of our present civilization.

*The Capitalist Crisis*

A GLANCE over the pages of Capitalist history will force us to realize that it is very largely the history of a struggle between these two classes. As we have seen, the upper class started with the supreme advantage of owning the means of production, and therefore of confronting the lower class with the alternative of being employed on the employers' terms or of starving.

On the other hand, the lower class had one card to play: it could strike. But to make a strike effective means that you must organize; only a large body of men coming out on strike, so as to stop the work of the firm, is likely to be of any avail. The lower class, therefore, organized itself into Trades Unions, and through these Unions gradually manœuvred itself into a better strategic position. No one seriously denies to-day that the Trades Unions, however much they were originally disliked, were absolutely essential, not only for the lower class but in the interests of the ordinary decencies of labour. The average citizen may be surprised and shocked if he looks up the history of the conditions of labour before the Trades Unions became effective. Men and women and children were sweated horribly. Young children worked for

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twelve hours a day in the factories until Parliament passed an Act to forbid this appalling exploitation. The story of the early days of the nineteenth century in the Durham mines, for instance, reads like a story in one of the blackest periods of Moorish slavery.

#### *The Policy of Higher Wages*

The more enlightened capitalists, however, came to see that, apart even from moral considerations, it was wiser to pay their employees good wages and improve their standard of living rather than sweat them. A well-fed, decently clothed and housed workman will work better than a man who is half-starved. He will be more contented. If he is given a good education, he will probably work more intelligently than an illiterate man. This is certainly true where skilled labour and clerical or administrative work are required. But it is also true as regards the menial forms of labour. My own experience in the war was that an educated man would learn to peel potatoes better than an illiterate.

Partly, therefore, because the enlightened type of capitalist saw the wisdom of this policy, partly because the State realized the need of removing some of the worst abuses by insisting on certain conditions in industry, and partly because of increased productivity, the standard of living under Capitalism in this country gradually rose. A great

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many evils remained, and still remain. Vast masses of the lower class are living in appallingly overcrowded homes, in houses which are alive with vermin. But this must not blind us to the fact that under Capitalism the average standard of the workman's living has improved.

If the upper-class employer had been able to continue to pay higher wages, he would probably have been able to safeguard his vested interests, anyhow for a much longer period. In America, where the policy of high wages used to be more generally followed than in any other country, the Socialist Movement has been at its weakest. Where the employee can be sure of earning his keep, and has enough over to pay for a certain amount of pleasure, he is much less likely to complain of his status.

But the lesson of recent history shows that Capitalism cannot afford to carry out this policy. It will be realized at once why this is so. Wages necessarily count under the capitalist system as one of the costs of production; for labour-power is bought by the employer just like the machinery and the raw material with which the products of his industry are turned out. An owner can therefore only pay high wages if his profits are large—if, in other words, there is not excessive competition in his class of goods and the market is therefore large and stable. The moment his profits fall, he is forced heavily to reduce his costs. And one of the



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first directions in which he economizes is in the reduction of his wages bill.

### *The Effect of the Machine*

The fact that machinery has largely replaced hand-made products has to a certain extent helped the capitalist in resisting Labour attempts to obtain better terms of employment. The machine means that fewer men are needed than where manual labour is the method of production, and consequently there is a smaller demand on the Labour market. The more production depends on the machine, the more the owner of the machine finds himself in a position of tactical advantage.

Machines turn out goods much more rapidly than hand-labour, and mass production is therefore the inevitable result of mechanical civilization. But, as there are more goods, a larger demand for the goods has to be found, or else the goods are wasted and the business fails to make a profit.

There are some people who apparently regard the dole as an extravagance or a charity which the upper class allows to the unemployed merely for generous and humanitarian motives. But this is an obvious error. The dole is mainly an insurance against revolution. Moreover, if an unemployed man has no money, he will be unable to pay for food or clothes or fuel, and the market for these necessities therefore shrinks. He begs for or steals food, he wears rags, and he shivers over an empty

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grate. But if he is paid a dole he can afford to some small extent to pay for the primary essentials. Insurance benefit, or any form of distribution of money among the poor, increases the market for necessary goods and is, therefore, in spite of the heavier taxation it entails, an economic gain to the producer. It is, no doubt, morally bad for people to be completely idle, especially if they are encouraged to be idle by being paid money without having to give service for it. That is the evil of a rich class which possesses money without working for it. But, economically, it is an advantage to distribute money among the poor, even if no work is given in return for it, because it increases the demand of the poor for goods. A large destitute class means a shrunken market.

### *The Export of Capital*

We have seen that one of the main features of Capitalism is that it has been a competitive system. A free market means that there is no limit to the competition, and, as Capitalism developed, the pressure of competition in many industries became excessive. Competition is a relentless war, and one reason why the employer has been unable to pursue the policy of high wages is that competition has inflicted on him the penalty of increasing his other costs.

It was therefore inevitable that in the competitive struggle Capitalism had to look for an extending market. Not only did the number of rival firms tend

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to increase, but the capacity for making more goods, which improving machinery provided, meant that the employer had somehow to find a larger demand for his larger output. He was forced to create a bigger and still bigger turnover.

No development has more seriously affected Capitalism in its later stages than the fact that the profit which has been made in the home market has had to seek new outlets for profitable investment. If this capital, born out of profit, does not discover new outlets, it clogs the home market. Moreover, although investment in the more primitive countries has always tended to be risky, it has been worth the risk; for in primitive countries labour is cheap, and therefore, once the railway and mines, factories, and electric power stations have been started, goods can be produced and distributed at a much lower rate than in more civilized countries. Hence big profits may be expected.

Capital has had to seek foreign investment so as to enable primitive countries to buy the machinery for their own industrial development which the producer was anxious to sell them. They have set up their expensive equipment by means of the capital loaned by British investors.

But it is not difficult to recognize the inconsistency in this process, namely, the conflicting purposes for which Capitalism seeks a foreign market for its goods and its investments. Capital is exported in order to gain larger profits; but the

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capital loaned abroad is really loaned to enable the primitive native industry to make goods which will enter into competition with the products of the advanced countries. Only if the native industry competes successfully is the foreign investment profitable. But, if it competes successfully, it is the home-produced goods which suffer and the capitalist at home who finds his products challenged by these foreign imports.

The effects of this contradiction of purpose have only become evident in recent years. So long as there were but a few highly developed industrial countries and there were correspondingly a large number of undeveloped countries waiting to be exploited, there was room for both processes to work without clashing. But to-day the position is very different. There are a comparatively small number of virgin territories remaining, while the majority of countries have become advanced industrial concerns. Great Britain now begins to feel the pinch. In the nineteenth century she had almost the whole world for her market. There was an unlimited demand for her goods. But more and more of her former customers now make their own goods. And in many cases it is British capital which has enabled them to do so.

### *Combination and Rationalization*

In the leading industries at home the stress of competition led to a great change in the capitalist

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system. Competition was replaced by combination. This change took place because the industries found that competition had become ruinous and wasteful, and also because any large industry requires a large amount of capital which individual competing businesses cannot normally expect to raise. Once capital is concentrated in vast sums, an industry can afford to turn out goods in larger quantities and therefore at a comparatively lower cost, so that the demand for the goods is expanded. Rationalization is really the admission that free competition does not pay. It involves the grouping of units which were originally rivals, and the combining of their capital resources, equipment, and goodwill.

We have seen this process taking place all round us. The keen rivalry, for instance, between the various railway companies first gave way to a formation of these companies into four big groups; and now, even between these groups, there is a "working agreement" as regards rates of transport and speed. The banks have formed into five groups, all pursuing a common policy. Some of us remember the days when there was a wide choice of independently owned morning and evening newspapers: many of these newspapers have ceased to exist, and most of them are produced by an amalgamated press. The big manufacturing industries have followed the same policy. Even in the retail trade we see big stores and firms cutting out the small businesses, and we shall often find that in some country

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town a shop which continues to trade under its old name has in reality been bought up by one of the big London concerns.

Other examples of the combination process are Imperial Airways, Imperial Cables, the Central Electricity Board, and the British Broadcasting Corporation. These monopolies have been created by the State, and to some extent are State controlled.

But although competition has been lessened in the home market, the next phase of Capitalism has seen an intense quickening of international competition. We have referred to this already, but it is so important a feature of the present situation that we must examine it more closely.

#### *Economic Nationalism*

The fact that all civilized countries are 'going industrial' and that countries, which were once feudal and primitive, have begun to turn out their own manufactures—often with the help of British capital—has, as we have seen, taken away much of the export market for British goods. Great Britain, whatever happens, can never again enjoy that monopoly which brought her prosperity in the nineteenth century. European countries, British Dominions and Colonies, and even Asiatic nations have their own industries, and British goods cannot compete against the native firms. It is our export trades which have mainly suffered, as the figures of cotton and coal sorrowfully tell.

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Looking at Capitalism as a whole, we find that internal competition has been replaced by national combination and monopoly. The more Capitalism develops, the more difficult is it to find a foreign market and undeveloped soil for the investment of capital. The process of monopoly has begun and will inevitably continue. It is the vital problem which Capitalism will have to face in the near future.

The policy which Great Britain and other capitalist countries have been driven to adopt in the face of this dilemma is that which is called 'economic nationalism'. Economic nationalism is an attempt to make the home market safe for the home producer by shutting out foreign goods through high tariffs and embargoes; it is an endeavour to decrease imports and increase exports. But few countries are large enough to be entirely self-supporting. They cannot grow the raw materials necessary for their manufactures. Hence Capitalism aims at becoming imperial rather than national, and endeavours to find closed areas which will prove a safe surplus market from which foreign goods, as in the home market, can be excluded.

The fact that Capitalism was driven to take an imperialistic form is clearly seen in the recent history of our own country. Those who were not born in time to remember the South African War will nevertheless have a fairly shrewd idea as to why we fought the Transvaal and the Orange Free

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State. The same influences were at work in India, Egypt, and China. British financiers also invested large sums in Europe and North and South America, and British influence has been a world force precisely because of its financial network.

The imperial development must necessarily be a main road to war. For the fewer the virgin territories left to exploit, the keener will be the attempt of the advanced and capitalist countries to acquire them, so as to benefit by their trade at the expense of their rivals. The militarist policy of Japan in the Far East is the natural outcome of economic imperialism, and an even more recent example is the attempt of Mussolini to gather Abyssinia into an Italian Empire.

Most of us have listened to the appeal of Lord Beaverbrook and his newspapers to make the Empire a self-contained trade unit, so that it can cut itself off from trade and political relations with foreign countries. But imperial isolation will not work, because most of the Dominions have themselves become industrialized. Canada, for instance, will not allow our manufactures to compete with her own. Even a comparatively undeveloped country like India is already competing with some of our home products.

The world is driven back on economic nationalism, and this is one of the main causes of the world slump of 1930.



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### *The World Slump*

There is no lack in the number of people who are prepared to explain the causes of the world depression, and how recovery is to be brought about. The remedies which they offer are various. Some of them who wear green shirts tell us that the trouble has all to do with money and with the power of the banks to create and withdraw money. Others will explain that it is due to the machine and over-production. Others, again, will argue that it is a consequence of the war, and that prosperity will presently return of its own accord, if only we are patient enough to sit down and wait for it.

Many of us may have been puzzled by this conflicting advice. The general answer is, however, that these theorists are offering us a part-truth; their explanation is not entirely false, inasmuch as the slump has been due to a number of converging influences. But most economists agree that the trade nationalism which we have just been considering has aggravated the general depression. The depression was precipitated by the breakdown of the open market, the collapse of the international exchange of commodities, and the cessation of the steadily balanced export and import of capital. These repressive nationalist measures have successfully destroyed the system of world exchange which had been working, fairly satisfactorily on the whole, before the war, and had begun towards the close of 1928 to reassert itself.

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But it is unlikely that we shall be completely satisfied with this answer to our question why the world slump happened. It is not enough to say that the slump is due to economic nationalism. We shall go on to ask why the nations should deliberately engage in a policy which is fatal ultimately to their own interests. Why should mankind persist in following the very road which has already brought it to the edge of disaster?

The answer is simple, but it is an answer of the greatest importance, and it is an answer, moreover, which many people have as yet failed to realize. *Economic nationalism is the natural result of competitive capitalism.* It is the second stage of capitalist development. Let us see why this is so.

In the first stage, as we know, there is a free market within the State. In every industry there are a number of rival firms, fighting against each other to obtain larger custom and bigger profits. But this warfare becomes so intense and so wasteful that it is followed by a process of combination. The big units buy up the smaller concerns, waste is replaced by large-scale production and rationalization, and bigger profits are made because of these economies. In other words, internal competition tends to give way to a national organization of monopolies, and the free market within the State ceases to exist.

Other countries, however, begin to carry out a similar reconstitution as they become increasingly

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industrialized, and, consequently, the trade rivalry between each national unit becomes intensified. It is no longer a matter of one free citizen-producer competing against another citizen; it is rather one nation as a huge trade organization competing for world trade against other nations similarly organized. The second stage of capitalist development, in fact, marks a radical economic change. Formerly in the world market the nationality of a firm hardly mattered. No one noticed very much whether the firm which produced matches was Swedish or British. But in the second stage, into which we are rapidly passing, the State has become almost a syndicate representing the vested interests of its private property-holders. It is significant, indeed, that, whereas in the earlier days of Capitalism the employers resented State interference in trade enterprise, they now expect the State to use its machinery to support them, as, for instance, with protective tariffs.

The position of the State, therefore, has itself changed. The State is no longer a neutral policeman, standing outside the ring and merely concerned with seeing that its competing citizens do not break the rules of the game. It has staked so heavily in the betting that it has ceased to be a disinterested spectator. And consequently the trade relationships between States have undergone an entire transformation. Each State has been driven to adopt a policy of economic nationalism because

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it can allow no quarter to the other States with which it is in active competition. It has to concentrate all its forces to keep its home market safe for its own monopolies and to capture so much of the world market as remains unexploited.

If we appreciate that this is the position, we shall understand why each country has adopted the nationalist trade policy, and why, therefore, international trade has been strangled. It may be suicidal, it may have been the main cause of the economic crisis, but the nations reply that they have no choice. It is war, not peace. It is no longer a question of private industries on their own responsibility competing in the world market. Once these industries have combined and have behind them a State backing, it becomes an economic struggle between States. The trade world is thrown into a condition of acute tension. Monopoly within the States means economic enmity between the States.

### *Unstable Money*

But we must now turn for a moment to those counsellors who tell us that the troubles of the world are due to money. It is quite true that most of us have much less purchasing power than we should like to have. Most of us have to economize, and consequently trade suffers; we do not buy the extra luxuries we should normally buy.

Money presents a very complicated problem to which I should have to devote a whole treatise if

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we were to attempt to investigate the problem thoroughly. But, as finance is not our immediate subject, we must be content with a brief survey of the problem.

The main trouble about money, so far as trade is concerned, is that it is not stable in price. When all nations are on a gold standard the price-level in the world generally tends to remain steady. But many countries have been forced off the gold standard—that is to say, they can no longer guarantee that the issue of money corresponds to the amount of gold in their possession.

We have become familiar with the curious spectacle of a civilization of plenty, an age when goods are produced in great quantities, and yet of an age when millions of people are in want of the goods. Why do the goods fail to reach them? Why has the machinery of distribution so largely broken down? Why have the producers actually in some cases been forced to curtail and even destroy their produce, when the demand is larger than ever?

As most of us know, there are several kinds of money. Coin is not the only form: a great deal of money circulates by cheques and credit bills. But it is not necessary for our purpose to distinguish these various forms of money, for all of them are built upon and closely related to commodity money; that is to say, no one is going to accept a cheque or a treasury note if he suspects that it fails to represent a value which is based on the value of

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gold. Bank and these other forms of credit or fiat money are not actually weighed like bullion, but they are directly representative of the commodity of gold.

Now gold, like any other commodity, varies in price. When large amounts of it are available, it is cheaper; when it is scarce, its price goes up. And it follows from this that at a period when money is rising in price a man who has saved money, and wants to buy an investment, will wait until he can get a bigger return. Similarly, he will hesitate to buy, because he will delay his purchases to a moment when he will get more goods for the money he has set aside for spending.

If there is any confusion in our minds as to this, it means that we have not grasped the meaning of the term 'price of money'. We should not think of how many goods a pound will buy, but of how many goods will buy a pound. We shall then see that if the price of money is high, it will take a larger number of goods to buy a pound; and if the price is low, fewer goods will represent the pound. Consequently, we hurry to invest and purchase when money is going down in price. We hoard our savings and buy as little as possible when money is becoming scarce and the price of it is rising.

The fact that money varies in price is disastrous economically, for obviously, when the price of money fluctuates violently, it will mean that money is not fulfilling its function as a medium of exchange.

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C wants to borrow £100 in order to start a business. But if the price of money is high, his loan will be too expensive, and he will postpone his enterprise—that is to say, the expansion of production is held up by the flexibility of money-price.

Thus the purchase of goods and the investment of savings are held up—the very factors on which trade prosperity depends. And they are held up not because A is in no need of a new suit, nor because A has failed to save money: they are held up because the price of money has not remained stable.

The instability of the price of money is equally disastrous to the manufacturer. Suppose I have bought the raw material for making a number of pianos at £10,000. I calculate that by selling all these pianos I shall make £20,000, and thus, we will assume, of realizing a profit over all my other costs. But it takes a long time to make a large number of pianos. Meanwhile the price of money may have changed and the £20,000 I receive when all my pianos are bought may, by that date, be worth half of what it was before. Therefore, although I have sold all my stock, and for the sum I hoped to get, my profits are wiped out—and the price of money is the cause.

No wonder that, when money is unstable, producers hesitate to produce. Trade is therefore restricted; factories work at half time, employers are cautious, and many workers are thrown out of employment.

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Once again, money should serve as a means of determining the amount of a debt which one man owes to another. A contracts with B for a large office to be built on a waste piece of ground. It will take B a long time to put up the building, and it will take A some time before he can let the various rooms for different offices. B agrees to erect the building for, say, £100,000, and he quite understands that A will not be able to pay this sum immediately. A, in other words, will be in debt to B for a considerable period. But meanwhile the price of money changes. By the time the £100,000 is due, it is worth only what £50,000 was worth before. Half the debt is wiped out, not because of anything A has done or B has done: it is due entirely to the change of the price of money.

Why does not the price of money remain constant? It is partly due to the fact that money of all sorts is affected by the value of gold. Gold, like any other commodity, is sometimes plentiful and sometimes scarce. Prices in the world were falling in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the reason may well be that the supply of gold was less than the demand. When, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the South African mines produced a new supply of gold, prices rose and prosperity returned.

It is not difficult to appreciate that the rapid export of gold by this country to America, and the export of gold to Germany and to France, has produced financial and therefore economic chaos.



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### *Monetary Reform*

Capitalist economists therefore come forward with a number of suggestions as to how the price of money may be made stable. Some of them want us to go back to the gold standard, others want us to substitute some other commodity for gold as the basis of the value of money, others suggest fixing a price-level for goods either in our own State or Empire, or in the world generally.

To consider each of these proposals would involve us in very technical questions, to which the whole of the rest of this book would have to be devoted. But we need not follow these particular inquiries further, because, although it is true that monetary reform would improve the situation, and is indeed essential if the world is to recover, it is only a part of the problem.

Major Douglas tells us that the present chaos is the fault of the banks. If bankers, he declares, could be forced to issue credit money in proportion to the production of goods required, all would be well.

But none of these financial reforms will prevent the world from being plunged from time to time into trade crises, nor will they prevent the recurrence of depression between the cycles of prosperity. The main reason for this is that monetary reform in itself would not ensure that psychological equilibrium which is essential whenever a boom in trade has led to reaction in the form of a trade depression. This trade-cycle of boom and depression appears to

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be an inherent feature in the capitalist system, and the effects of the reaction could only be avoided if the financier and capitalist owner could be induced to carry on as if there were no depression. But no kind of monetary reform is likely to be sufficient to create this invincible sense of confidence.

Another reason, according to some economists, why economic crisis is produced is that the proportion of public saving (investment) to public spending is not necessarily equal to the proportion of consumption goods to capital goods (capital goods may be roughly defined as the machinery, the land draining, power stations, etc., which produce consumption goods). When the proportions become unequal the price-level moves, with disastrous results.

Without involving ourselves in such technical considerations as would be necessary if we were to investigate this theory, we shall see that this liability to correlative disproportion is due to the fact that one set of people decide how much of their productive energy to put into capital goods and consumption goods, while another set decide how much to invest and spend. The two processes of investing and spending are quite unrelated. All sorts of reasons may induce capitalists to spend heavily on capital goods at one given moment—such as the discovery of some new invention which promises to bring in big profits. On the other hand, a new group of producers may suddenly appear to compete in a field which was once the preserve of

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a particular industry: artificial silk manufacture, for example, has heavily reduced the demand for pure silk goods. Capitalists are then disinclined to invest in the threatened industry, and prices in that industry fall.

### *Capitalism itself Creates these Difficulties*

We have now come to the point where we can diagnose the troubles of the present situation. International trade, as we have seen, is being stifled because each country is adopting a policy of economic nationalism. And each nation is adopting the policy of economic nationalism because the system of free competition within the State has inevitably given way to monopoly.

Similarly, trade depression is caused by the uncertainty of the price-level, and the uncertainty of the price-level is caused partly by the fluctuation of money value and partly by the fact that the amount of capital invested has no relation to the amount of money saved by the purchasing public.

Thus it will be seen that the troubles from which the world is suffering are due mainly to the capitalist system itself. Free competition leads to monopoly combinations and thus to economic nationalism. If one set of people invest, and another set save, without reference to each other's interests, we inevitably get a fluctuation of the price-level. Capitalism, in other words, is a system in which production is carried on without any concerted

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plan. The wealth of the community is concentrated in a small class who own the means of production. They are out primarily to make profits for themselves, so as to carry on and extend their business and keep their ends up in the relentless war of foreign competition. They, and they alone, determine how much of their wealth is to be invested and how much devoted to the production of consumable goods. Profit is the determining factor, and there is anarchy rather than plan.

We must now consider whether there is any hope for Capitalism. Can recovery come about under a capitalist system, or must some other system take its place?

## CHAPTER IV

### *Can Capitalism Cure Its Own Troubles?*

It has seemed unnecessary to consider the plea of those comfortable prophets who assure us that the war has caused the economic crisis and trade depression, and that presently prosperity which, as they tell us, is always waiting round the corner will return. Most people are probably too intelligent to be deceived by these sort of assurances, even though they may see signs of a partial recovery taking place. For if we are certain that we have discovered the causes of the crisis we shall know that real prosperity is impossible until these causes have been removed. If we know beyond doubt that the unpleasant smells in our house are due to bad drainage, we shall not be taken in by people who tell us that we have only to sit down and wait and the smells will be blown away. We shall recognize that the trouble is bound to continue until the drains have been set right.

Similarly, we realize that the capitalist system is not suffering merely on account of war wastage and debt. No real recovery can take place until the inherent evils of the system are removed. There will be a 'turn of the tide' and partial recovery, no doubt; but, so long as the root of the evil remains, evil consequences must be expected.

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Can Capitalism cure these evils? As we have seen, they are the inevitable result of capitalist development, and at first sight, therefore, it would seem to be impossible for Capitalism to save itself. But there are many economists who, while recognizing that Capitalism is on the verge of collapse, think that it can be saved and think that it is worth saving. They are ready with various constructive proposals which we can roughly classify in two groups: the first school advocate the policy of a return to the free market; the second school present the policy of planning—that is, of still further restricting the free market.

### *Free Trade*

The first policy is really the old Liberal doctrine of free trade. This school of thought recognizes that if the gates of the world market were reopened and imports and exports flowed easily once again, world prosperity would be restored. Most of us will naturally ask how on earth this is to be brought about. Who is going to compel the various nations to remove their tariffs and abandon their attempt to be self-supporting? And the moment we have asked this question we have put our fingers on the weakness of the Liberal case. It may be quite true that the restoration of the world market would save Capitalism, but there is not the remotest sign that it will be adopted. For we must remember that, although economic nationalism is disastrous for

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mankind as a whole, it is very beneficial for certain producers and financiers. An industry which has secured the home market under the shelter of a protective tariff is not like to be induced to abandon its advantages for the good of humanity. Capitalism is a competitive system, and profits have to be thought of first.

The only way in which the free market could conceivably be restored is if economic nationalism led to another world war and thence to world bankruptcy; in other words, if the situation became so desperate that the nations were forced to realize the folly of their present methods, the free market might be reopened. But, if this happened, it would be a treatment so drastic that it might easily kill the patient instead of curing him. A depression so acute that it drove the nations freely to buy and sell from each other once more would mean that there was not much left to buy and sell. Recovery would come so slowly that civilization might disappear meanwhile. Hunger, riots, revolution are not exactly helpful for a return of world prosperity.

It is worth while noticing, moreover, what this policy would involve, even if it were practical. It would mean the breaking up of the big trusts and monopolies within the State, for as we have seen it is the disappearance of free competition within the State which leads to nationalism and the closing of the world market. A return to free, tariffless,

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world competition can only be secured by restoring the old competitive system within the State, and so insuring that individual firms of one nation come into touch with individual foreign firms, without either party possessing a national status. To put the clock back like this may seem very sentimentally desirable from some points of view, but it is wildly impracticable. And, when put to the test, it is a policy which actually would be opposed by millions of citizens. Investors who feel comparatively safe, now that their dividends are linked to vast resources of capital, would think twice before they consented to divide up these concerns into little competing units with reduced capital reserves. It is not only the big monopolists, with their immense financial interests, who would have to be persuaded; a mass of people with small interests in the big concern would also have to vote for destroying the groups. Legislation would have to be passed to prevent any re-establishment of trusts. And such concerns as Imperial Airways would have to be split into a number of rival firms.

Monetary reform would also be an essential condition of the free market. Somehow money would have to be made a stable medium of exchange. This might be brought about by a world bank, a centralized authority which could control all bank-rates in the various countries and to which the nations would entrust their gold reserves. But how could the big financiers be induced to yield to this



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central authority? Such a bank is only conceivable if there were a world state behind it.

The big financial circles would be against it. And eventually the employee class would be against it, for the return to the open market would mean that all these small competing firms would once again be compelled to ask for a free hand in cutting down costs. Competition means competition for profits. Consequently, all the forces which prevent the price of labour falling to its natural level would have to be swept away. Trade union rates would have to go, and eventually, in the stress of competition, the social services would have to be curtailed. The employee classes, when they found out to what this policy was committing them, would be entirely hostile.

### *The Smallholder Class*

The section of the community from whom support for this policy can mainly be expected is the smallholder class—the section which corresponds in social phraseology to the lower middle class. The small trader, the man who still runs his own business, such as a retail shop, would obviously welcome a suppression of the large-scale stores; he desires above all things an opportunity to compete once more in a free market, not on impossible terms as against the Harrods and Selfridges, but with his own fellows in a world of small business.

This is the class which a generation ago was the

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bulwark of Radicalism and Nonconformity, and it is very natural that many members of this class should associate with romantic glamour an age when Cobdenist ideals seemed about to be fulfilled. Even so eminent a Liberal economist as Sir Arthur Salter speaks of "the economic and financial structure under which we have grown up" as "at the moment of its greatest perfection more like one of the marvellously intricate structures built by the instincts of beavers or ants than the deliberately designed and rational works of man" (*Recovery*).

But we must be careful, in spite of Sir Arthur Salter's romanticism, not to allow ourselves too readily to attribute the British prosperity of pre-war days to the system of free exchange and unrestricted supply and demand. The prosperity was there, but it was there because this country possessed an empire, as well as a virtual monopoly in certain leading trades, the products of which the foreigner needed and could get nowhere else. Even if free trade could be established throughout the world, Great Britain could never again be in this advantageous position.

It is interesting to notice that Fascism, both in Italy and Germany, has sprung mainly from the small-trader class and claims primarily to represent this standpoint. But, as we shall see presently, Fascism actually involves the very opposite of the free-trade principle. It is bound up with an extreme form of nationalism, which, in its turn, involves

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a national economic Plan. This brings us indeed to the alternative policy which Capitalism offers for its own recovery.

### *State-Planned Capitalism*

This second policy is a much more likely development than the first. We have seen how difficult it would be to set back the hands of the clock and return to the open market, whether in the State itself or in the world at large. All the most powerful financial and trade influences would be arrayed against it; and even if by some miracle these interests could be overcome, it is almost certain that the old competitive system would entail, for the bulk of the community, such acute disadvantages as to compel them ultimately to resist it.

But the conception of a State Plan has obvious possibilities, and all the portents seem to point to this as the road which Capitalism will take. A planned Capitalism means, first, a closed market from which foreign produce would be as far as possible shut out. The ideal environment for a nationalist policy is in a country like the United States, which is large enough in area to be virtually self-supporting. It would be impossible in a small area with a big population, such as Great Britain, which must rely on large quantities of imports not only for food but for the raw material of much of its industrial production.

The unit would therefore have to be larger than

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Great Britain. Lord Beaverbrook would make it the British Empire, but we have remarked already on the difficulty of that proposal—the Dominions have their own industries to consider and would never consent to any imperial plan which endangered those industries. The British Empire is not a natural economic unit, as we saw at Ottawa, precisely because of these rival industrial interests. The closed area would therefore probably include such foreign countries as the Argentine and the Scandinavian group—good customers and producers of many goods of which we stand in need. The Plan would gather in these various units, after a carefully designed agreement had been reached as to what goods they would import from us and what they would give us in return.

#### *The Danger of Rival Imperialisms*

This is a much more feasible and possible policy, but there are two dangers or difficulties which arise from it. The first is that this closed quasi-imperial market would lead to the creation of other similar closed markets. If Great Britain were to enter into such a plan with the Argentine, Denmark, Sweden, and some of the British Dominions, for instance, and ceased, as the Plan would demand, to trade with those outside the ring, such as America and France and Germany, these other countries would certainly form rings of their own. Our trade with these countries is still considerable, and if we ceased

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to exchange goods with them, they would be forced to adopt similar measures. It may be said that this would not greatly matter: we should be safe in our own closed market, and should not be threatened by theirs. But we must be careful to realize what such a situation would involve. It would mean that, in place of the large number of independent countries at present competing with one another, there would be a small number of these combined groups of nations. Capitalism, in fact, would move from the national to the imperial stage, for from a trade standpoint these vast closed markets would be empires. The relation between these empires would become more acute. Economics closely affect politics, and the creation of four or five independent and powerful empires, existing side by side, would not exactly be an augury for peace. Each of these powerful units would be in competition for the possession of undeveloped countries outside any of the rings. It is possible that this might prove to be a stage on the way to international trade and international political unity; but experience shows that the creation of one national or imperial monopoly leads to the creation of others, and that they tend to compete rather than combine. A world split up into a few rival empires would provide just the conditions from which wars arise. From this point of view Capitalist Imperialism is much more dangerous than Capitalist Nationalism.

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### *Who is to Control the Plan?*

It will be seen that if there is to be a Plan it must be controlled by some central authority. This authority must be able to decide absolutely what is to be produced and how much is to be produced by the various industrial units. If this control were absent, the position would be that of a number of uncontrolled monopolies, with the result that output would be seriously restricted. The question therefore arises, who is to work and control the Plan? If there is to be a Plan, who is to enforce it? It will need a great deal of enforcing. It will mean the closing down of some firms, and may even involve the abandonment of certain industries. It will mean a strict control over the amount of production, of price, and of wage-costs.

A Plan means nothing less than the regulation of the prices of commodities and the control of the expansion of bank credit. It means the limitation of production up to a certain rate of demand, with no opportunity for surplus production which can be dumped outside the ring. A Plan, in fact, is really the organization of a nation into one firm. It is Great Britain Ltd. Competition is therefore eliminated. Profits are pooled. One of the vital elements in Capitalism will have disappeared.

Now, who is to compel the financiers and capitalist producers to agree to such a curtailment of their present powers? They may recognize the need of a

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Plan, in theory, but when it comes to practice in their own case they will naturally raise objections. Someone has to devise, enforce, and carry on the Plan. The Plan cannot be worked on a system of private enterprise. A unifying central authority has virtually to replace the capitalists.

We have seen this policy attempted in the United States, where the power has been vested in the President; and we have seen how many obstacles have been placed in his way by the vested interests affected, in spite of his dictatorial powers. It is clear, indeed, that the authority which a National Plan demands must be a political authority. Someone outside the immediate economic circle must assume the control. The authority can be no less than a State authority.

In a democratic country it is unlikely that the Plan would remain the creature of the capitalist class; for if the authority were political the lower class would certainly in time come to be represented in that authority, and that would mean nothing less than the sharing of the ownership of the tools by upper and lower class. We should come, then, within measurable distance of nationalization or a Socialist State. The distinction between classes would disappear, for class distinction depends radically on the fact that one class owns, and the other does not own, the tools.

This process, therefore, would mean the merging of planned Capitalism into Socialism. There is only

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one means by which this development could be averted and capital possessions saved by the upper class—that is, by ensuring that the political machine enforcing the Plan is undemocratic. A capitalist dictatorship would alone preserve the capitalist system in this final stage.

#### *Fascism*

If we are asked to define Fascism, we shall probably find the task far from easy. It is difficult to define Fascism, because Fascism is less a unity than a combination of several different tendencies. We have seen that primarily it claims to represent the small-trader section: it sets out to be anti-big-capitalist as well as anti-Communist. But actually it is backed, in every country where it has come into power or is a movement, by the big capitalists, for they see in it a last barrier against the encroachment of lower-class influence and Socialism.

Fascism is essentially anti-democratic and anti-constitutional. It means the seizure of power by a dictator, such as Hitler or Mussolini. It would therefore work very well with any National Plan controlled by a political authority, which was set up without democratic control, and which the lower class could not therefore influence. In fact, it would be the most effective way of preventing the lower class from taking their share in controlling the Plan.

Fascism is accordingly designed, in the last resort,



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as a defence of the interests of private ownership. But how is the nation to be converted to it? The big capitalists and financiers form only a small section: the small trader and the mass of employees must be rallied to the support of this small section. But why should they support an order really designed to save the possessions and privileges of the big capitalist? Some other orientation is required. Fascism is therefore wrapped up with an appeal to patriotism. It becomes, as in Italy, a united national effort to make Italy the efficient modern State. In Germany it has relied on the resentment which the German people have felt against the Versailles Treaty and its aftermath. In Great Britain it might possibly be represented, in modified form, as a call to all good men and true to save the country from the Communist peril and enlist under what would be called 'national service'.

Fascism therefore involves an intense nationalism, and nationalism is the most favourable soil for a National Plan. But, without entering too far into the realm of prophecy, it is difficult to see our people consenting to a violently unconstitutional regime. It is unlikely that the other sections of the community, especially the employee class, would, in the long run, consent to a Plan which was worked by an authority representative only of a small clique. Sooner or later the control of the economic machine would pass outside that narrow circle; for, if that oligarchic system came into force, it would

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mean that what Hilaire Belloc described long ago as the 'servile State' had become a terrible reality. If business is controlled by an oligarchic monopoly, all of us who are not big capitalist owners will be at the mercy of that monopoly. The small body of directors will have become the State. We shall not have the advantage which even the limited free market of to-day gives us, when, if our immediate conditions of employment are unsatisfactory, we can at least attempt to find employment in some rival concern. There will be no rival concerns. Nor should we possess the remedy which theoretically we should have under a representative State monopoly. Under that regime we could use our influence in the political machine to redress abuses; under an oligarchic monopoly there would be no political machine available to obtain redress.

Eventually, therefore, a planned Capitalism must almost certainly involve a political control representative of the State as a whole. This control would mean that the private capitalists would gradually or rapidly be forced to abdicate their own powers of control. At first, no doubt, they would dominate the machine. But unless they succeed in setting up and maintaining an autocracy this centralized unifying control will eventually represent the whole community. Employees will demand a larger share in the profits, in the form of higher wages, and they will be in a much more favourable position, because of the national control, to make their claims effec-

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tive. Control will pass so entirely out of the hands of the owner class that the term 'class' will be meaningless. The private ownership of industry will cease virtually to exist. In fact, planned Capitalism may prove to be a direct road leading to something which is hardly distinguishable from Socialism, or Socialism may come in other ways.

Before we leave this part of our subject we should consider the argument that the dangers arising from a planned Capitalism would arise equally under a Plan designed on the communal model. The difference between the two systems, however, is that the first system is profit-making and the second is not. If the profit element were eliminated it is difficult to see how a planned State could be tempted to become an aggressive rival to its neighbours. Even if the neighbouring States remained true to the capitalist design, the home State would no longer need to secure a closed imperial market. Its aim would be merely to supply its own people, and by its exports to obtain, by exchange, goods for its own people which it could not itself supply. The implications of a non-profit-making system go far, but it should be possible to appreciate them more fully as we explore this problem further.

## CHAPTER V

### *How the New Order Will Come*

WE have now reached a point in our inquiry when it will be useful to pause so that we may measure the conclusions at which we have arrived, and test the reasons by which we have reached them. I am not going to indulge in a tiresome recapitulation: I am going to trace the course of our journey by means of a parable.

There is a town where A, B, C, and D are butchers. They supply meat to the townsfolk, and though they are competing with each other there are enough customers for each of them to build up a good business. They also supply neighbouring towns and villages where there are no butchers.

But presently other butchers begin to compete. E, F, G, H and others spring up and enter into the fray. It becomes an increasingly desperate fight between them, and each firm finds it necessary to advertise feverishly and insist that their meat is of an exceptionally attractive quality. Moreover, F, G, and H, and B, C, and D combine, and each of these groups begins to offer meat at lower rates and by express delivery, so that A and E find it more and more difficult to retain their old custom. They cannot broadcast their advertisements on the scale to which the F-G-H and B-C-D firms are able to

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indulge, nor to spend money on a large fleet of butchers' vans. Eventually they go under, and only the two groups are left.

But presently the two groups also begin to find that conditions are becoming difficult. For one thing, butchers have begun to spring up in the other towns and villages, and every time B-C-D and F-G-H attempt to bring meat into these other towns they find that a toll-gate is closed against them: they are only allowed to enter if they pay such a heavy due that they would have to sell the meat at an impossible price, which would mean that none of the inhabitants would think of buying it.

Other trades in the town have had the same experience. The tailors, bakers, shoemakers, and grocers have a similar story to tell. They have combined, but, even so, they cannot sell to the other towns. And in their own town times are bad. People are poor and buy less. B-C-D and F-G-H therefore combine, and presently all the trades together go to the town council. "You must put up a toll-gate," they say. "Meat and clothes and other goods are coming in here from the new firms in the adjoining towns. We cannot take our own goods into these towns, for these iniquitous toll-gates have been raised against us. If our neighbours shut us out, you must shut them out, or else we shall all be ruined. And if we are ruined, the whole town will suffer."

The town council agrees, and the toll-gates are

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set up. But things do not improve much, for there is now no room for expansion. Custom is confined to the town and to a few stray villages outside. When costs have been rigorously cut down and lower wages paid, it is found that this means that the shop-assistants have less to spend. The old employees of A and C are out of work altogether, and several of the other staffs have been cut down. Some of the townspeople then approach the town council, and say: "Something must be done, or else we shall never get back to prosperity. All the trade in this town is going from bad to worse. It's your job. What are you going to do about it?"

The town council then hold a meeting and listen to the various suggestions which various people have to offer.

The first suggestion laid before them is that everyone must wait patiently, and, beyond being very careful not to indulge in wasteful spending, go on as before. Then everything will come right in time. (This counsellor does not explain *how* everything will come right, or how the causes which have produced the present crisis are going to remove themselves, or how, if everyone spends less, the trade of the town is ever going to recover.)

The second suggestion is that B-C-D and F-G-H shall be broken up into small competing firms once more, and that all the neighbouring towns shall be allowed to sell their goods in this town as before, on condition that they pull down their own toll-

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gates. (But this counsellor does not explain how the neighbouring towns are to be induced to open their gates, or how the old war between A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H will be prevented from eventually bringing about exactly the same condition of affairs as have helped to precipitate the present crisis.)

The third suggestion is that B-C-D shall not only continue to combine with F-G-H, but shall join up also with all the butchers in all the other towns, and so form a trust or monopoly all over the country. (But this counsellor does not explain how the butchers in the other towns are to be persuaded to enter this combination.)

The fourth suggestion is that not only shall B-C-D and F-G-H combine, but that all the other trades in the town shall co-operate together in one united scheme. "The present position", says this counsellor, "is that trade here is disorganized. The butchers have far too many grazing-fields and too many cattle. You, the town council, should work out the number of bulls, sheep, and pigs which the townsfolk will need to eat, and order a reduction of the stock accordingly. The grocers and tailors and bakers and shoemakers, etc., must also come under your plan. The same vans can distribute all the goods. Working together under this organized design we can cut out a lot of waste energy, and make the town a really going concern. All our resources will be pooled. Then we shall be in a

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position, perhaps, to come to some sort of terms with the other towns."

Which of these suggestions is most likely to be adopted?

Few of us will have much hesitation in voting for the last, as being by far the most practicable and hopeful proposal. We will assume that the town council agrees with us.

B-C-D and the other traders then say: "Very well. We are quite in favour of this proposal. But we own the bulls and the fields and the shops and the vans, and we are going to work this Plan ourselves. We shall make ourselves into a town council and run it."

But the town council replies: "Oh, no; you can't do anything as revolutionary as that. The townsfolk have elected us to govern the town, and we are going to carry on with our job. This is a town Plan, and we are the people elected to represent the town. You must submit to our control."

So eventually B-C-D, etc., agree. And then there comes a day when the townsfolk say: "Look here: this butcher business is no longer the private concern of B-C-D, etc. It is worked and backed by the town council. Why should B, C, and D own the fields and the cattle? Their business is not now run on their initiative. B, C, and D have become agents under the town council. It is the townspeople, which the council represents, who should receive the profits of the business. These profits can go to reduce



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the price of meat and pay the wages of the butcher assistants, and also to pay for those new mills which the millers badly need. The capital of this town-business must be pooled, and no part of it must be pocketed by B, C, and D, or any of the others. We shall see that at the next election of the council this proposal is carried."

### *Why Planned Capitalism is a Temporary Economic Stage*

Although this parable is merely a summary, it will be seen that it represents in crude outline the developments which have led up to the present economic situation. It illustrates the apparently inevitable process by which Capitalism becomes a huge monopolized trust, and it emphasizes that the issue which eventually becomes acute is the question as to whether the means of production is to remain in the hands of the big capitalists. That issue is not acute when there are a number of small competing businesses. Everyone, in theory, has then the chance of becoming an owner, and of running his own show: there are few things that the normal man likes more to feel than that he has the responsibility of his own concern. So long as there is a remote chance that he will one day be his own master, he is not likely to quarrel even with a system under which large-scale ownership is virtually restricted to a small section. Moreover, just because there are these small competing firms, the market determines the price of the goods that are offered. But where

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industry has become centralized, a small group become the owners of an enormous property. Wealth, derived from this massed ownership, has become immensely concentrated. Consequently the regulation of price is a much more serious matter; for the free market, which in the competitive stage of capitalism tends to control price, has gone, and therefore it becomes essential for some authority to enter in and exercise control over price and production. The argument which Capitalism always uses in favour of private ownership, namely, that there will be no business initiative unless the people who run the business own it and can therefore make the profits, no longer applies; for in a huge monopoly trust 99 per cent of those who carry on the business do not own any part of it at all. They are merely agents of a vast trust.

All the conditions of this latter stage of Capitalism seem to lead in the same direction: namely, that the means of production cannot remain a private possession. The concentration of ownership, and therefore of wealth gained by profit, the fact that price must be regulated, the fact that eventually industry must be worked under a Plan, and that some authority other than the owners must work the Plan, all point to the same goal: namely, that the means of production must pass into the hands of the community.

If the means of production did not become the property of the community but remained the

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private property of the owners, the situation would become more and more intolerable. For this small body of owners, with the accumulated wealth of the combine, would have rid itself of most of the responsibilities of ownership. The owners of the combine would be working under the controlled Plan—they would have become a monopoly with no fear of competition and yet they would be receiving the profits. Obviously the authority which works the Plan must take the profits, and private profit-making must cease.

It is difficult to see, therefore, how Capitalism, once it has become a planned system, can fail to become a system under which industry is publicly owned; in other words, planned Capitalism merges inevitably into something which is very like Socialism.

We can hardly fail to realize what a fundamental social change this merging of private into public ownership involves. The whole basis of capitalist society has been built on the distinction between the people who own and the people who do not. That is the meaning of the 'class system': it is an economic distinction. Once private ownership in industry is abolished this distinction goes. We shall no longer have a class which is rich because it owns property. We may have people who are comparatively rich and people who are comparatively poor, but that will be because of what they earn, not because of what they own. The difference between a large salary income and a small one will no longer be a

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difference of class it: will depend entirely on the value of the work for which the individual is being paid, and it is therefore an individual rather than a class distinction.

It matters very little what we choose to call this further development so long as we appreciate what it involves. It involves the end of the competitive system, and it also involves a classless society. For the fundamental basis of class-distinction will have vanished, and this means nothing less than a new stage of civilization, just as Capitalism was a different civilization from Feudalism.

### *Socialism*

It is difficult for us who have grown up under a capitalist system to imagine a classless society: our education, our personal relationships, our professional occupations are too intimately affected by the capitalist environment. Our minds have become focussed to the capitalist horizon. It is not easy to peer beyond that horizon even with the eyesight of imagination.

But it is easy enough to grasp in principle the meaning of this third period of civilization on which we appear to be entering. The fact that the key-industries have become publicly owned will mean that goods will no longer be produced for profit; they will be produced solely for the consumer's benefit, and without that extra charge which has to be levied on them so as to secure a profit for the

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private producer. Moreover, in a civilization where land was no longer privately owned, there would be none of those overhead rent-charges which at present burden all forms of industry, and which inevitably raise the price which the consumer has to pay.

But the great difference, as we have seen, between the two orders of civilization is that in a classless order of society there is no longer a class which possesses wealth without having worked for it. Except for the very young and very old and those incapacitated from work, everyone becomes a worker and can only receive money in return for services performed. There is, therefore, no longer an owner class and a class which exists to minister to the owners. All are on the same footing. If some receive more and some less, it is because of the value of the work they do, and the difference in their position is therefore a difference of individual merit and not of class prestige.

We are not considering at the moment whether this is a better or a worse order of civilization than that with which we are familiar. All that is necessary for our immediate purpose is to realize that the change would not be merely economic: it would be social, and would therefore affect our lives personally.

Most people when they consider a classless society immediately think of it as a class society in which the lower class have become the rulers. There is no excuse for that mistake: although, as

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we shall see in a moment, the revolutionary method involves a transition period during which the proletariat are the dictators. Nor are we justified in supposing that a classless society means that there will be no longer any differences of taste, of culture, or intelligence. There will always be variety in human nature, so far as we know, and in a classless society there would still be artistic and 'high-brow' sets, as well as 'low-brows' and 'sporting' and other groups. But there is a great difference between a set and a class. A set is merely a collection of people who have a natural affinity: a class is a race of people with a distinct economic status. Under Capitalism all individuals of the upper class receive a similar type of education, not because of their individual merits but because they belong to the upper class.

### *The Social Democratic Way*

Some people are puzzled as to how far Socialism and Communism differ. But Communism, in the main, is a particular means of bringing about socialism, although people sometimes use the term to imply a particular brand of Socialism.

The big social and economic change on the threshold of which we are standing may come about with the collapse of Capitalism in its final or 'planned' stage. By sheer stress of circumstances a Socialist order may have to be introduced. Or it may be brought about by a political programme. That is the Social Democratic policy—to introduce those

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changes by constitutional means. If this is to be the process, it will begin to operate when a Labour Government has been returned to power on a full-blooded Socialist programme. But it is almost certain that, if this happens, the forces of Capitalism will concentrate for a desperate defence of their vested interests. The House of Lords might throw out a Labour emergency bill, another credit panic might be staged, there might be an attempt to organize a Fascist resistance under the cloak of patriotism, so that the majority of English men and women would rally in what purported to be a defence of the country, but would really be a defence of the property of the big capitalists.

The Communist case against the Social Democrats is that, when a crisis of this kind arises, the Social Democrats invariably capitulate to the Capitalists. It is claimed that they did so in 1914 by supporting a capitalist war, that they failed again in the General Strike, and that they ran away from the financial crisis in 1930 or else went deliberately over to the capitalist ranks and supported the National Government.

This criticism is probably true. When a crisis has arisen which, as in the example of the Great War, was produced by Capitalism, the history of Social Democracy has always shown that it was afraid of risking revolution. But it does not inevitably follow that because Social Democracy has compromised in the past it will do so again. The Labour Party may have learnt its lesson. It may realize that it has

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been tricked on previous occasions and refuse to be tricked again. A new spirit may reveal itself in the Labour Party and it may refuse to be frustrated in its task. But we shall appreciate the inevitable difficulty with which Labour as a constitutional party will always have to contend. Whenever it tries to lay the foundation of the Socialist State the whole constitutional machinery will be used against it, for Capitalism is at present in possession of the constitutional machinery. Capitalism can almost certainly rely on the House of Lords, the City, and the Services. All these forces will be mobilized against any serious attempt to supersede the capitalist system. Can these forces be overcome by constitutional means, or will Capitalism itself be tempted to commit a revolutionary act and fire the first shot in its own defence? There we enter into the realm of prophecy, and I am a sufficiently bad prophet not to wish to explore across that border farther than is necessary.

### *Communism*

The Communist despises the Social Democrat for his past record, and has no faith in his future policy. The Communist is quite sure that the capitalist system cannot be constitutionally superseded on the Social Democratic theory. The parliamentary vote, argues the Communist, cannot lay the road to the Socialized State, for the upper class will never vote away its own privileges, and the lower class will



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never secure a sufficient majority of votes. Socialism, on the Communist doctrine, can therefore only come by the overthrow of Capitalism, by the seizure of power through revolutionary means, and by the forcible subjugation of the 'bourgeoisie' under a proletarian dictatorship, until the bourgeoisie have become genuinely a part of the proletariat.

The difference between the Social Democrat and the Communist accordingly becomes clear. The Social Democrat wants to take over the State as a going concern, while the Communist is determined first to reduce it to ashes.

Each of us will, no doubt, form our own views as to which is the wiser and better policy, and also as to which of these roads the course of events is more likely to follow.

Revolution is not a pleasant experience. It takes less time to construct a socialized civilization on a going concern than to do so when everything has crashed and the foundations have to be relaid. Some will question whether it is morally justifiable to introduce a new order, however essential and necessary that order may be, against the wishes of the majority and at the expense possibly of murdering human beings. That is an issue on which world opinion is still much divided. Many now hold that nothing can be done by democratic methods, and that there must be an interval during which the revolutionary authority is firmly established and counter-revolutionary forces ruthlessly crushed.

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Our task is to decide whether the new civilization can be and should be introduced by democratic means; and to consider whether the British genius for introducing drastic change by constitutional rather than violent methods is equal to this further task. But my immediate purpose is simply to insist that this change of civilization is inevitable, and that its main feature will be that of a classless non-profit-making society.

### *Twilight of the Capitalist Era*

If we harbour any doubts as to the inevitability of this change, we have only to watch the lengthening shadows of twilight in the world to-day. Mr. John Strachey in a book,\* to which I readily admit my own debt, has an interesting chapter on the evidence of contemporary literature. Art is usually the mirror of an age, as well as, in its higher forms, an indication of coming developments. John Strachey might have made his chapter even more interesting, for he has severely limited his choice of contemporary authors who serve as examples of the general realization of the crumbling of capitalist civilization. He might have included Noel Coward, for instance, and quoted the strains of *Cavalcade*:

In this strange illusion, chaos and confusion,  
People seem to lose their way.  
Nothing left to strive for, love or keep alive for;  
Sing Hey! Hey! Call it a day!

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\* *The Coming Struggle for Power.*

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The verdict of the older writers is a chorus of bewilderment. They have not yet shaken themselves free of the legacy of the Victorian belief in progress, and those who happen to be sufficiently advanced in years to view life from that angle will agree that the present collapse is alarming. Some older people attribute this collapse to the war, but that is not a convincing explanation, for there ought already to be some signs of recovery; and instead of recovery we are confronted with a world which is economically in a more critical condition than in 1919, and politically little better off than in 1914. The leading authors of the older school are too intelligent to imagine that the slight economic recovery of Great Britain is a sign that the older system will be put firmly on its legs once more. They know that Britain is in a better position than her contemporaries merely because of the vast wealth and resources which she accumulated in the vanished days of comparative trade monopoly. She is like a rich man in a financial crash: the rich man will not feel the effects of the crash so rapidly as his rivals, for he has still a big reserve of capital. But, if it is a real crash, his own collapse is merely a matter of time.

Wells, in spite of his creative imagination, has no clear gospel to preach. He clings to the old doctrine, and thinks that Capitalism might be saved by a big business Plan, by a Liberal Fascism of nations, by an international combine of Clissolds; but he is

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evidently at a loss to account for the real Fascist development. Shaw, who has a keener intellect than Wells, frankly threw up the sponge in *Too True to be Good*, although in *On the Rocks* he suffered a partial conversion. But Shaw has no doubts as to the significance of the situation; he is himself on the rocks because he feels that he has spent his life in taking the wrong road. He has become rather too readily convinced that Social Democracy is not the way, and that Communist dictatorship is the only possible medium. He secretly assents to Lenin's description of himself as 'a good man fallen among Fabians'.

The general evidence of literature, especially among the younger writers, is that of a sense of barren failure. The opening chapters of Lippman's *Preface to Morals* should remove any doubt on that score; or Aldous Huxley's intellectual pessimism, as preached in *Brave New World*. The old culture is dropping to pieces: moral traditions, religious beliefs, orthodox standards of art have crumbled, they feel, and nothing has taken their places. Some, like T. S. Eliot, tell us to go back to the old inspirations; some, like Huxley, tell us to build up a new religion without the supernatural. The advice is confusing. New forms in music and painting, as well as in literature, are struggling to assert themselves: young poets like W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender have reacted already from the current pessimism. But the majority have no vision as yet

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of the coming civilization; they are conscious only of the deterioration of the present order, and their lack of faith causes a lack of inspiration. The older generation seem to have a certain amount of justification when they sit back in their arm-chairs and assure us that modern ways are leading us fast into chaos. They may affect to wash their hands of the whole catastrophe, but they forget that, if chaos is indeed to be our fate, they are more to blame for it than anyone else.

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But though the thinking half of mankind may be affected by the prevailing sense of destructiveness, they should not be tempted to despair. They ought to know that these signs are the inevitable and, indeed, the natural portents of the twilight of one stage of civilization. Because the culture of an age is dying with the age, that does not mean we are on the threshold of a reversion to barbarism. The world does not tend to revert; it moves on to something else.

To believe that a new order will emerge out of the chaos does not, necessarily, involve belief in the gospel of human progress, for the gospel of progress is merely a valuation of the new order in comparison with the old. We believe that there is progress, for instance, if we think that Capitalism is a better order than Feudalism. We may also believe that the new order which will follow Capitalism will

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be an improvement upon it. But these valuations are secondary considerations.

The claim which I am advancing is merely that when one system dies another is born. The world does not stand still. Whether the new order is better or worse than its predecessors depends largely upon the ability of man to learn from experience so as to avoid the failures and imperfections of the past.

The decay of Capitalist culture does not necessarily imply that we are drifting into chaos, for the human mind does not make for chaos. The younger generation reveals the symptoms of virility rather than of decadence. It should be capable of ensuring that the new civilization is an improvement on the old.

To attempt to rejuvenate a dying order is ultimately a waste of energy, for rejuvenation is actually an attempt to arrest the forces of nature. Our efforts should be turned towards construction and should aim both at eliminating the evils of Capitalism and rescuing from it any good qualities which are applicable to the coming system.

## CHAPTER VI

### *How the New Order Might be an Improvement*

PERHAPS the best way to set about our task is to discover, at the risk of reiteration, what have been the defects of Capitalism, and what, therefore, ought to be avoided in fashioning the new order.

A competitive system is a system of war. If a man is able to make his business succeed, he does so at the price of downing his rivals. In the earlier stages of competition the business man does not notice that he is living in a state of war, for there is ample room for every competitor. But, as we have learnt from bitter experience, competition becomes more and more acute so that presently it leads to a condition of affairs in which there is very little security; for, as we have previously downed our rivals, a new rival may presently down us. We never know when our own business may be undercut, or the firm in which we are employed will have to discontinue the use of our services in the interests of economy.

### *The Evils of Competition*

It is worth while examining this system more closely, because we have often been told that competition is the only way to ensure initiative and keenness in work. People may have to suffer, but the old law of the survival of the fittest is a law of nature;

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and accordingly, it is said, we grow slack if we are not forced to struggle.

But this is really a half-truth. What is true is that, if we happen to be of an indolent character, we grow slack if our work does not interest us and if we know that, however lazy we happen to be, we shall draw the same salary as we should draw if we were industrious. An order of society, however, in which everyone had to work, an order in which there was no class which was allowed to possess wealth without having worked for it, would easily provide against this tendency. If you were neither too old nor too young to work, you would have to work or else you would starve. The incentive to work would simply be the need of obtaining the necessities of life and of possessing a home where you and your family might enjoy the ordinary comforts and amusements.

But, you will be told, such a regulation will only ensure that you work, and not that you work well: a man will do the minimum amount required to obtain the normal comforts, but no more. There are several answers to this objection. One answer is that with the increased efficiency of machinery it will not be necessary for the general standard of work to be so exacting as hitherto. This development will occur, irrespective of any particular economic system. There will be more time for leisure, and if you choose to work harder than the general standard required that will be your own affair. The extra



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hours of labour you put in may be useful to the community, but not essential. If you put in overtime, it will be because you happen to be keen on your work: that, and not profits, will be the reward.

Another answer to this objection is that, in reality, most men do their best work if they are freed from the anxiety of wondering whether they will be able to support themselves and their families. An enormous proportion of men to-day are wasting their energy in the sheer effort of keeping themselves from going under. The nightmare of unemployment, instead of stimulating, handicaps their activities. Much of my own life, for example, has been spent in wrestling with the problem of how to earn enough to keep going. If I had been relieved of this strain of anxiety, I could have made much better use of my capacities. Any well-ordered State ought to be able to guarantee the ordinary necessities and recreation to every man who works reasonably well. And 99 per cent of men and women will work well if only they are working with a background of security.

If ever we meet anyone who believes that insecurity is a stimulus for human effort, it may be well to ask him to consider the example of two city offices. In the first office, all the clerks are reasonably sure that the firm is safe, and that, if they do their job well, they will get their pay regularly and receive a pension when they retire. In the second office, the clerks know that their firm is on the rocks and

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may smash to-morrow. Will the clerks in the second business do better work than those in the first? Anyone who has any experience of office life knows that such a suggestion is ludicrous. The clerks will serve their firm much more faithfully if they know that it can afford to be faithful to them.

Nothing to my mind is more pitiable in the present order than the perpetual waste of energy caused by the harassing uncertainty of employment. It is difficult to imagine any economic order much worse than one in which thousands of men and women are unable to give themselves to the creative work of which they are capable, and are forced to slave at a routine job because it is a choice of that or abject poverty. Can any system be satisfactory in which nearly two millions are unable to find any work at all? It is a confession of abject failure on the part of capitalist civilization that it cannot use the services of every able-bodied citizen and guarantee him a decent maintenance in return for his work. It would be a ridiculous spectacle if it were not so tragic. But it is the inevitable result of a competitive system.

There are other answers to the claim that the present order makes for initiative. The argument that a man works best when he is running his own show and fighting against rivals is oddly inopportune to-day. Ninety per cent. of workers, whether manual or mental, do not run their own show in any shape or form: they are employees of a big concern over

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whose policy they have no vestige of control. Watch the suburban trains discharging their cargo each morning at Liverpool Street or Waterloo: only a tiny fraction of these workers are other than clerical automata, paid to do their job, and not at all sure that, however well they do their job, they will continue to be employed.

Anyone who really believes that men will only work well if there is a chance of their earning vast profits is still thinking in the terms of capitalist mentality, and we shall never be able to visualize a new form of civilization if we interpret it in the terms of the old form. It is quite true that there are some men who do their best when they can enjoy the gamble of making a vast fortune, even if in so doing their speculations may land them in bankruptcy. But this is precisely a type which a competitive and profit-making system creates. That type did not exist in Feudalism; such restless energy usually expressed itself in military swashbuckling. The commercial adventurer will gradually cease to exist in a non-profit-making civilization; or rather, he will find an outlet for his ambitions in some other direction. The successful profit-maker is an expense to the community; for once you allow vast profits to be made by one man or a set of men, you perpetuate a class system, and you pile up an accumulation of wealth at one end with a vast destitute or impoverished section of society at the other.

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Another result of a competitive system which should be mentioned, though it is of less importance, is excessive advertisement. Advertisement in itself no doubt has its merits. But as competition becomes acute, advertisement becomes artificially exaggerated: the competitors are driven to accept contracts at less profitable prices and must appeal to the public to buy in large quantities, so that overhead costs may be met. We are familiar with the spectacle of frantic electric signs urging us to buy what we should not otherwise want to buy. Besides disfiguring the landscape and making more hideous our city streets, it is very doubtful whether these frenzied appeals are a healthy form of mass psychological influence. No one, except the advertisement agent, would be worse off if the need for such appeals vanished. Many features of the modern advertisement and publicity campaign are glaring instances of the vulgarity to which a competitive system is forced to descend.

### *The Evil of Profit-Making*

Some men who have made big profits have undoubtedly been of value to society. When I refer to the imperfections of Capitalism, indeed, I do not imply that it has brought no benefits to humanity: I am suggesting, rather, that it is a transitional stage in economic life and probably quite a necessary stage. But not its most ardent admirer will claim that it is a perfect system; and

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if our aim is to create a better order of society, it is obviously necessary to diagnose the faults of the old order.

The fact that any one man is allowed to make unlimited profits is an economic evil, for it means that with these profits he is able to acquire the ownership of the means of production: he may buy several acres of land; or he may start a West End shop; or become the biggest shareholder in an industry. He acquires thereby a large amount of possession and power, and he passes this on to his son, although his son may not have the least capacity for similar administration.

A small rich class means a large poor class. A small rich class means that wealth is unequally distributed, and this, of course, is a distinct disadvantage to the community. No one who has any knowledge of economics imagines that a millionaire justifies his existence because he employs many servants and buys many luxuries. He knows that, if money is to fulfil its most useful purpose, it must not merely change hands: it must create new wealth. If I spend £100 on chocolate creams, my £100 is doing very little good: it has merely changed hands, and the goods which I get in return for it are eaten up without creating any fresh wealth. But if it enables me to plant fruit trees, my £100 has not only changed hands, but it may continue to produce fresh wealth in the form of fruit.

Moreover, a country is in a better position if its

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stable industries and 'necessary' trades are widely supported than if it has come to rely mainly on its luxury industries. It is often difficult to draw a distinction between a necessary and a luxury—a motor-car may be a necessary to a doctor and a luxury to a bank manager. But generally we can draw the distinction without much trouble: chocolate creams, for instance, are not necessities, and a country would be in a much sounder condition if it could boast a large agricultural production than if it had a large number of chocolate cream factories. Both of these industries may give the same amount of employment; but the chocolate cream will never be so stable as the agricultural trade, for people will always want bread, whereas they can—at a pinch, anyhow—do without sweets.

Now, the unequal distribution of wealth must always be an economic disadvantage to a country because it means that luxury trade thrives at the expense of necessities. If you have two million unemployed, it means that even if they are being paid a small dole they will have to buy a bare minimum of food and clothes and fuel. Millionaires are probably less economically useful to society than a large number of people with small incomes; for the millionaire does not buy necessities on any bigger scale than other individuals. He needs only the average amount of necessities, and his surplus expenditure goes in luxuries; whereas, if those who at present have to save on necessities were provided

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with a reasonable income, the staple industries would secure a correspondingly larger market. Luxury trades would suffer, but necessary trades would benefit.

### *The Necessity for Equal Distribution of Wealth*

Inequality of wealth is also an evil from a moral standpoint; for why should some people, through no fault of their own, be badly housed and badly fed, while a small section possess an amount of wealth which is altogether unnecessary for their happiness? Few of us will doubt that many rich people have a quite superfluous wealth. If a man's income rises from £300 to £600 a year, his capacities for pleasure are enormously increased; his whole standard of life has altered. But a man whose income rises from £5,000 to £10,000 does not thereby correspondingly extend his opportunities for enjoyment. There was once a rich man who, in the prosperous Victorian days, built himself a house in the south country. His family were married, so that he had no need of a house larger than one which should accommodate himself, his wife, his servants, and occasional guests. He built himself a house, however, which has since been turned into a school and is able to board 300 pupils and staff, without any extension. This was sheer waste of space, so far as he was concerned, and it is no answer to point to the employment which he gave to the architect and builder. It was waste, for he could not

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be in all the rooms at once, and meanwhile there were thousands of his fellow-citizens who were herded together in small hovels.

Rich people have, of course, been of use to the community when they have used their wealth wisely. They have been able to encourage art and sport, to build stately mansions and lay out big estates. The big estates have no doubt helped to beautify our English countryside, though it is doubtful whether, if the masses became educated to bury their orange peel and empty beer bottles after their picnics, a countryside of public property would not be more beautiful and less irritating than one which is largely fenced in and placarded with that 'wooden lie': 'Trespassers will be prosecuted'.

It is sometimes said that rich people have justified their existence by giving largely to charity. But we must always remember that charity is a form of insurance: its effect is to keep the poor content with their poverty. However generous-minded the wealthy may be in their alms-giving to the poor, the policy which they are actually pursuing is that of perpetuating the order under which they retain the privilege of giving.

If the people who owned the key position in society—the large amounts of wealth and the sources of production—received these rewards in return for their individual service, there might\*be something to be said for the system. But when we remember



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that most people possess these large quantities of wealth, not because they have earned it, but because they have inherited it, the imperfections of such an order become obvious.

### *The Effect of Equally Distributing Wealth*

Let us try to imagine an order of society in which all industry and big business is publicly owned, and in which everyone has to work if he is to have any money at all. As we have agreed, it is not easy to imagine such an order, for it would be radically different from that with which we have grown familiar. This society would be classless, for there would no longer be the two grades of owner and employee. There would be no unemployment, for all the work to be done would be shared out. There would be no poor, for in return for his services each worker would receive, either in the form of money or a ration-card, enough to guarantee him the ordinary necessities, food, a house, etc., and a surplus amount for recreation. The wealth to be shared would be the total amount of wealth which the community itself was creating. Each worker would add both to the amount produced and to the demand. The standard of living would fall only if the population grew too large for the area of the country (assuming no international exchange of services), so that the supply of raw material was unequal to the demand.

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Could Wealth Equality be Brought About?

Could this system be created, and, if it were, would it create evils of its own? Let us consider the first of these questions.

An equalitarian system could be created, provided private ownership were replaced by public ownership. There is no substance in the objection that under such a system some people would save and accumulate wealth so as once more to evolve a rich class. They could not invest their money, for there would be nothing in which to invest, except probably Government stock, which certainly would not provide gamblers' fortunes. If they buried their money it could be made as worthless as an expired railway ticket—merely by being dated. Accumulation could also be prevented by appropriation through taxation of all amounts privately owned, above a certain figure.

Who will do the Unpleasant Jobs in a Socialized Civilization?

But is such a form of civilization desirable? Would it create evils worse than the evils of Capitalism? It is not easy to answer a question which covers so wide a range of inquiry, particularly as it concerns an order of society of which we personally have had no experience. But let us turn to some of the objections which are popularly raised.

There must necessarily be a certain amount of

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unpleasant and dangerous work, for instance, which has to be done. Who is to do it? How are the people to be chosen who are to be miners, or dustmen, or chimney-sweeps? This objection is not really a serious one. Mechanical invention will tend to make the nasty jobs less dangerous or uncongenial. And, in any event, applicants for the less pleasant jobs can always be attracted by the offer of shorter hours and higher pay.

Or it may be asked how a man can be sure that if his bent is music he will not be compelled to spend his life in an accountant's office—at the kind of work he happens to detest. It will be a little odd if this question is raised in the form of an objection, because the setting of square pegs in round holes is one of the chief features of the present system. Thousands of people are compelled to do work which they dislike, and are left no time to work at what they love. Unless they possess an independent income, they usually have no choice.

Obviously, under the form of civilization which we are considering, it would be easier to offer people the kind of work for which they are most fitted. Every child will receive the same primary education, and pupils who show a bent for special work will go on to schools where they can be more technically trained. Everyone, in fact, will have an equal start, and the kind of secondary and finishing education they receive will depend on themselves, and not on the amount of their parents' bank balance.

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As psychology develops it will become more easy to discover, at even an early age, the direction and degree of a pupil's capacities. If a man is a comparatively good musician he will be wanted, for there will always be a demand for good musicians. The man who is no good at anything will have to be content with a more menial job—although he will have plenty of leisure and opportunities therefore of improving his status, i.e. of being promoted to more interesting work. This will depend entirely on the individual and not on the social position into which he happens to have been born.

It may, of course, prove to be the case that there is a larger potential supply of workers for one kind of work than the demand for that work warrants. In one generation there may be so many musicians that some musical aspirants will be forced, after all, to be clerks. In that case they will have to blame human nature—at least the composition of their generation—rather than the economic system. And, after all, we must again remember that where the work is performed by the whole community everyone will have more leisure. The young amateur will have more time to give to his piano or violin than he has now.

### *Do not Label the New Civilization*

But the new civilization at its best will not be perfect. There will be flaws and abuses and failures, as in every other system. All we can say is that such

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an order as we are envisaging promises to remove some of the worst evils of industrial Capitalism, and to offer greater happiness to a greater number than is now the case.

Once we begin to attach an exact label to this next phase of civilization we are likely to consider it from an entirely false perspective. If it is described as Socialism, we may be unable to dissociate it from earlier theories which Socialists have advanced; for Socialism was born in the realm of theory, and however nearly the new order approximates to the original principles involved in the theory, it is bound to differ in practice in many important respects. Theory is rarely realized completely in practice. The earlier stage of Socialist doctrine, for instance, envisaged the complete State nationalization of industry, and most critics of Socialism still imagine that it will be a bureaucratic administration inseparable from the worst abuses of Whitehall. Yet already the developments of a Socialist character which have evolved show that this is not the form which a system of public control will take. The administration is likely to be carried out by a commission of men experienced in the particular work and not by Civil Service officials; the Electricity Board is a suitable example.

It is extraordinary what a number of irrelevant objections people raise if once they are allowed to label this coming social order. Many of these irrelevant objections are purely sentimental, as when

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people declare that they will die rather than allow the monarchy to be abolished. We might as well declaim against the new order on the ground that it may abolish first-class railway carriages. People who argue like this first assume that either monarchs or first-class carriages will be abolished; and then they assign an altogether unreal value to their preservation. The kind of name we give to the head of a State is not a much more material consideration than the upholstery of a *train de luxe*. There is no particular reason, as a matter of fact, why we should not continue to call our figure-head a king—provided the monarchy is freed from being a nucleus for class distinctions. There is not the least reason why people should not continue to call themselves earls and dukes, provided that by doing so they do not retain the power to hold up legislation. As for first-class carriages—there are soft and hard classes even in the Soviet Republic.

#### *Russia as Evidence*

But there is a much more serious trend in the kind of objection which arises in people's minds, once they have committed the mistake of labelling the coming order—and that is concerned with Russia. For in Russia we are confronted not with theories but with actual practice, and therefore any criticisms which can be raised on this score have a substantial basis.

There are, however, several considerations which must be thoroughly digested before we marshal our

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impressions of the Soviet Republic as evidence against the results of Socialism. The first of these is that probably our impressions of the Soviet are entirely second hand. We may not even have been to Russia, and, if we have, we probably do not speak the language and only went as conducted tourists. Our impressions are therefore likely to be grounded entirely on what other people have told us, or on what we have read in the English papers. But what we read in the papers must not always be taken literally, for most of our Press is out to spread the propaganda which the proprietors are paying for, much more than to supply news; and the capitalist proprietors are very anxious that we should only hear the worst about Russian Communism. Those of us who can remember the wild stories which our papers solemnly told us about the Germans in the war—how they boiled the bodies of their dead soldiers for ammunition purposes—and those who also remember how readily some people swallowed these stories, will hesitate before they accept the journalistic description of Russian timber camps as sheer gospel.

The second consideration is that there is a great deal to criticize in the Russian civilization. So there is in England. It is quite possible for a foreigner to come to England and paint a very black picture of our conditions; and he may be entirely accurate in his descriptions. Only, he will not be painting the whole picture.

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Undoubtedly as in most revolutions, there has been violence and bloodshed and cruelty in Russia. But it is odd to find that people who condemn the whole of the Bolshevik experiment as diabolical, because the Reds slaughtered several thousand counter-revolutionaries, are usually the same people who felt that it was no crime at all to slaughter thousands of Germans in the late war. A revolution is a war, so that people who applauded the killing of Germans are slightly inconsistent in being shocked by the killing of Russian Whites.

Undoubtedly the Russian standard of life is much lower than in an advanced capitalist civilization like ours. But that is no test. The proper test to take is to compare the conditions of Czarist with Soviet Russia and to ask which is the better system. Can we doubt that, so far as the general mass of the Russian people is concerned, there is no question that the conditions of the majority of the Russian people are better than before the Revolution? Even if we prefer to doubt this, there is no question that the majority of Russians believe that their lot has improved.

The third consideration is that Russia is not a Socialist civilization at all. Lenin admitted that. He was convinced that there must be a transition period of proletariat dictatorship. Russia is a country which has passed suddenly from Feudalism into the beginnings of Socialism, without the intervening stage of Capitalism. For this reason her experience



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and methods are certainly no precedent for what would happen in a country passing from Capitalism to Socialism. Further than this, we must remember that it will be impossible to estimate whether Russia's Communism has been a success or a failure until another hundred years have passed.

### *Russia and Religion*

Most people are too sensible, however, to believe all the stories which anti-Russian fanatics tell them, for they will know that some of these stories are too hysterical in tone to sound genuine. Similarly, we shall use more than a grain of salt when we read the stories of pro-Bolsheviks who pretend that the Soviet is a paradise. There is really little need for us to form any opinion at all about Russia, since any change of civilization which takes place here is unlikely to follow the Russian pattern.

A further indictment which is levied against Russia is that her civilization is atheistic. I consider this to be so serious a criticism that I am going to devote the remainder of this book to a consideration of that point. But one cannot help noticing how queer it is that many of those who most fiercely denounce the Soviet suppression of the Church are people who have never raised a little finger to support their own Church.

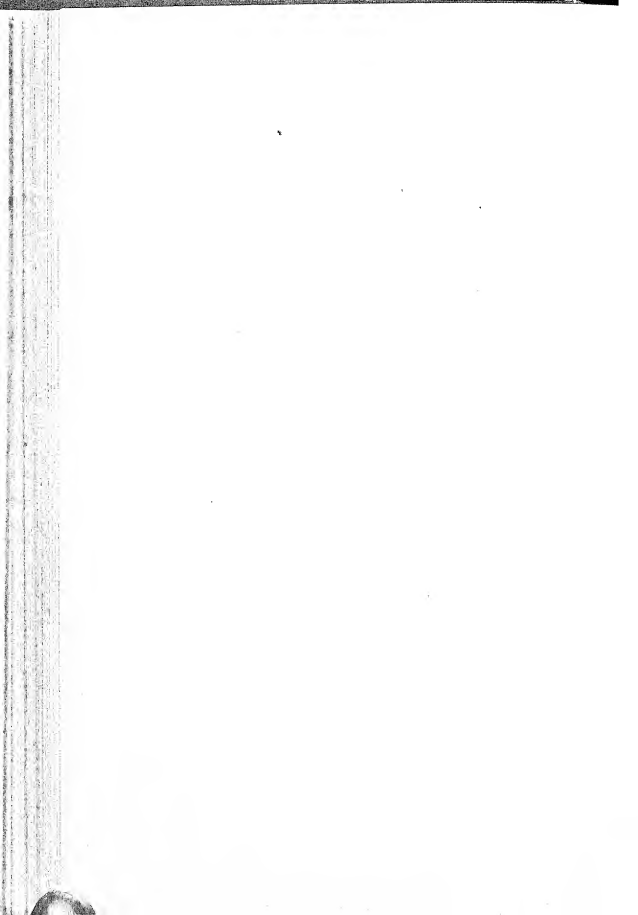
Russian Communism is itself a religion—not a theistical or deistical, but an atheistical religion. And like most other established religions it seeks to

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suppress its rivals. Its methods of doing this may be tyrannical and cruel, but there are few Christian bodies whose record entitles them to throw stones on that account.

Let us make sure that we know the stage which we have reached in our inquiry. The present capitalist order is breaking down and we are clearly at the end of an epoch. A new kind of civilization is inevitable. We do not label it because we can only trace the outline of its form. All that we can say with comparative certainty is that it will be an attempt to form a classless society, to replace the private ownership of industry by public ownership, and to abolish profit.

But will it be a materialistic civilization? That is the remaining and the crucial question.



PART TWO

*Will it be Materialist?*



## CHAPTER I

### *What Materialism Means*

WE must be quite clear in our minds as to the meaning of a materialist civilization. I hesitate to speak of 'spiritual values', for people are beginning to use this phrase as glibly as they used certain stock psychological terms a few years ago. If by 'spiritual values' we mean love, beauty, and truth, it is inaccurate to talk of Russian Communists as materialists. Marxists fall in love like anyone else, and they value love because they are human beings. The pains they have taken to encourage art is evidence that they appreciate beauty. Nor does their deadliest critic suggest that they are always telling lies. The Five-Year Plan and the attempt to build up a prosperous State is not their only consideration, for presumably that attempt is being carried out in order ultimately to give Russian citizens the fullest opportunity of enjoying the ordinary 'spiritual' pleasures.

It is odd, indeed, that anyone who ardently defends our present order should criticize Russia on the score of her materialism, for Capitalism itself is marked with many materialistic features. It is significant, for instance, that we should describe as a 'successful' man one who has made a lot of money. The extent of a person's wealth largely

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determines our view of him, and that is obviously an entirely materialistic valuation.

But if it is possible to misunderstand the meaning of the term 'materialist', it is equally possible to become confused in using terms which denote the opposite of materialism. I shall use the word 'religion' to imply this opposite, but it will be necessary, for reasons which I shall explain presently, to interpret that word in a wide sense. Also, I must make it clear that by contrasting religion with materialism I have not forgotten that Russian Communism is essentially religious in many of its characteristics and has been able to inspire the Russian people to acts of willing self-sacrifice precisely because of its religious implications.

## *The Issue between Materialism and Religion*

It may be thought that in devoting the second part of this book to such an issue I am revealing myself to be a crank who happens to have a mania for abstruse philosophical theories. But the critic who thinks that I am making a mountain out of a molehill will have parted company as much with the Marxists as with religious people. The Marxist, in practice, fully realizes the importance of this issue, and that is why he takes such pains to educate mankind out of religion. For, from his point of view, religion is a dope which fogs men's minds; so long as men are fettered by religious superstitions they will be unable to press forward. Our mental outlook

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matters intensely, and in this the Marxist materialist is quite right.

But it is time that we defined the issue. I am anxious to define the non-materialist, religious standpoint in the most general terms, because it is in these general fundamentals that we shall find the real conflict of theories. If we were to define the religious attitude in a more specific form we should be excluding from the religious side all those who are unable to accept the recognized religious creeds but are entirely anti-materialistic in belief. In a later chapter we shall pass on to consider whether Christianity itself will be overthrown by materialism, but our primary task is to discover the radical division between materialism and its opposite.

The religious standpoint, then, may be defined in this very general sense as follows: it is the affirmation that the whole of reality is not confined to the physical world, and, indeed, that the greatest values in life cannot be explained as the result of physical causes. On this theory, mind and intelligence, love, beauty, truth, and goodness—all of which are influences which intimately affect human existence and make it worth while—are not subject to physical jurisdiction. But they exist in reality. The real universe, therefore, contains these values, and since, on the religious theory, these values are greater than any values within the material world, it is more essential that man should strive to think and act so as more nearly to approach them than



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that he should be concerned with material considerations. It is more important that he should lead the good life, should love and seek after truth, than that he should eat or make money: more important in the sense that, whenever a clash comes between the two allegiances, it is the higher values which should determine his choice. If a situation arises in which he must decide either to feed himself or to give his food to someone whom he loves, he must serve the cause of love. He must be prepared to sacrifice his very life in this material world for the cause of truth and goodness.

The religious man makes this choice not as a gesture of sheer heroics or as a blind act of discipline: he does so because he believes that he must offer his allegiance to a power which is greater than anything which exists in the material world. He must relate his whole conception of morals to these realities outside the material universe. It is no argument against the genuineness of his motive to say that a religious man so acts because he happens to find pleasure in serving love or truth: he finds pleasure in this service because of his belief that the universe is the manifestation of a Love and Intelligence which is worthy of his devotion. The real universe is not, on the religious theory, made up merely of blind material energy; it is the home of a Mind and Goodness which, even if it be not absolute, is at least predominant.

On this definition the pioneers of Communism,

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both in Russia and this country, are unquestionably materialist. The materialist creed is an integral element in orthodox Marxianism, and if, therefore, the new civilization in our country is built on Marxian orthodoxy, it will be deliberately materialist in character.

But does it matter very much whether the new civilization is based on religion or on materialism? Are the Marxists right when they urge that it is intensely important that men should be freed from the old religious fairy stories? That is the question any seeker after truth will naturally ask, and he may not be quite sure as to the answer.

He may indeed have considerable doubt as to whether the issue is more than an abstract philosophical problem which has no relation to concrete action. He will ask whether, after all, men are going to behave very differently according to whether they believe that the universe was created on a plan or that creation was an accident. Will human conduct and the ordinary social relationships be affected by materialism? Will the good or bad nature of the new civilization be determined by the question whether it is founded or not on religious principles? That is the issue we have first to face.

Let us be honest about it. It is worth uttering this word of warning, for many people become extremely hypocritical when they approach this subject. Most of us have friends who denounce Russia because it

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has rejected Christianity, but who themselves have not the vaguest idea as to what Christianity means. Or we have sometimes met ardently religious people who, although they know what Christianity means, have wildly fantastic ideas as to what an atheistical society means. There is always something painfully ludicrous in strong emotional judgments which are passed without any definite evidence to justify them. A man who is a particularly violent critic of Russia on account of its apostasy was asked the other day to state what he considered to be the most disastrous effect of Communist secularism. His reply was: "Well, look at Russia: the people are starving." But whether he meant that God had punished Russia by sending her bad harvests, or that atheists must necessarily be worse agriculturalists and distributors than Christians, was not explained.

#### *Do Ideas affect Conduct? The Behaviourist Answer*

So we have to be on our guard against getting indignant over catch-phrases such as 'atheist Russia' and a 'materialist civilization', if we really do not know what these phrases imply. We have to admit that the question whether the new civilization is going to be materialist or religious has no importance at all sociologically, unless we are sure that men's beliefs have a practical effect on their conduct.

I have already paid tribute to John Strachey's book, *The Coming Struggle for Power*. There is an illuminating little footnote to one of its pages which

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is worth quoting, because it reveals very pertinently one of the most fundamental of the Marxian doctrines. Strachey is discussing H. G. Wells. "How categorically Mr. Wells rejects the materialist conception of history", he observes, "can be gathered from his quotation of Lord Acton's [the Catholic historian] remark, 'It is our [the historian's, that is] function to keep in view and to command the movement of ideas, which are not the effect but the cause of public events.' 'That is precisely where we stand,' is Mr. Wells's comment."

This quotation is illuminating because the context shows that Mr. Wells, by approving Lord Acton's affirmation, is immediately excommunicated by John Strachey from the true Marxian fold.

If we had any doubt of it before, we know now that it is a heresy in materialist eyes to say that ideas cause public events. The orthodox 'materialist conception of history' is that events (economic events especially) cause ideas.

It will hardly escape our notice that, if this is so, it is very illogical of materialists to attempt to remove religious ideas from the minds of men. Those ideas cannot matter, for they do not cause events; they have no effect on the kind of civilization man will form. It is the events of the new civilization which will produce either religious or materialistic beliefs, and all we have to do is to sit down and wait for the appropriate events to happen, or to try to bring the events about—though we must be careful

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not to think we are bringing the events about by any planned ideas of our own.

But, probably, Mr. Strachey and a considerable number of materialists would be quite consistent. They would not bother in the least about suppressing religious ideas and educating mankind into materialism. They would sit down and wait, because they are quite sure that the events which are coming will cause all religious beliefs to decay automatically.

The intelligent observer will not, however, have failed to appreciate the significance of this doctrine. It is naked irrationalism. It means that when man thinks he can reason independently of the events which are taking place around him, he is suffering from sheer delusion. It is not mind and ideas which affect events: mind and ideas are merely the result of events. A man's mind is part of his machinery. He is a machine, and no more. His ideas of beauty or truth, and good or bad, are simply the result of the way his particular machinery has been constructed, and of the fuel (food) with which he has been stoked up. He has no control over events: events control him. That is the teaching of the materialist school of psychology, which to-day we call 'Behaviourist'.

It is, of course, literally irrationalism, and we might at first be tempted to suspect the sanity of those who preach such a doctrine; for when we describe people as irrational we generally mean that they have become a little mad. We shall,

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however, be making a great mistake if we suppose that only a few eccentrics are propounding it. It is the teaching of a large number of quite serious scientists. Pavlov would probably disown the extreme commitments of Behaviourism, but Dr. Watson does not shirk its furthest implications. Dr. Watson will tell us that mind is merely an organ, like the hand and the leg, and that thought is nothing more than silent speech. He will point out to us that a child talks aloud to his dolls, and that only as he is gradually suppressed by his elders does the child go on talking under his breath. That is the beginning of thought. What we imagine to be our independent intellectual judgment and reasoning are no more than a physical activity, like the twitching of an eyelid, caused by external influences; or 'conditioned reflexes', as when our mouths water at the suggestion of certain kinds of food.

The implications of this doctrine are obvious. Our power to determine what is true and false, our estimate as to what is good or bad, our aesthetic taste for beauty, are mechanical action and nothing more. We do not achieve results, we do not reason, any more than a motor-car which is driven from London to Brighton arrives there because it has willed to do so. If we think that we are unlike the car, inasmuch as we have gone to Brighton because we reasoned out that it was the best place to spend a week-end, we are quite deluded. We had to go because, like the car, we were driven—driven by

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external circumstances. We only think that something is true because the forces which control our machine-mind happen to have brought about that particular result.

#### *Do Ideas Affect Conduct? The Answer of Psychology*

And this theory, which is so shattering to our sense of self-importance, is reinforced by another branch of psychology. Most of the psycho-analysts tell us that what we imagine to be our will is merely primitive instinct. We think a thing is true merely because we want to think so. We try to be what we consider moral merely because our unconscious desires are dictating that line of action, or, more often, because our desires have been thwarted and twisted by suppression out of shape.

The psycho-analyst does not deny the existence of mind; but he conceives it as something which is directed by quite irrational influences. Most of our mind, he points out, lies below what we term the consciousness, and this submerged portion is a rather primitive storehouse, full of the ordinary animal impulses, which are mainly sexual. Therefore we are not really responsible for our actions. The Freudian agrees with the Behaviourist in declaring that none of our actions are the result of a rational process.

It is logical enough, if we accept this doctrine, to say that events cause ideas; but it is difficult for materialists to be logical in practice. It is quite

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inconsistent, for instance, for Russian Bolsheviks to spend money on Communist propaganda in capitalist countries. For propaganda is an appeal to the reason and is justified only on the assumption that, when capitalists are converted to the ideas of Communism, they will bring about the event of a revolution. Yet how can they, if ideas do not cause events?

#### *The Probable Effect of this Materialist Doctrine*

We will consider in a moment whether there is any evidence that this theory is true. But let us first examine what effect it would have on mankind, if mankind were to accept it, and what effect, therefore, it would have on the civilization which is coming. This question is, of course, itself a contradiction of the theory, for the theory denies that ideas have any effect on actions. But that cannot be helped, for at every turn we shall find that we are driven to assume that the materialist theory is insupportable in practice, and that men's ideas do determine and are indeed the main cause of their deeds.

Assuming, then, that we obstinately persist in believing that men's ideas affect their actions, we shall have no difficulty in seeing that if this irrationalism became the accepted creed, it would be likely to have a devastating effect on human conduct. If man were persuaded that his reason was a delusion, he would not take much trouble over his reasoning. Intellectual effort in any direction would be at a discount, because men would have become convinced



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that intellectual effort could lead nowhere. Those kinds of enterprise which do not give immediate pleasure would be abandoned. Man would have lost faith in himself. For what is the use of trying to discover truth if it cannot be discovered? What is the use of endeavours to make the world more beautiful, if our sense of beauty is merely created by the kind of fuel with which we have been fed? Why try to behave as rational creatures when we are only impulse-driven animals? The advice which psycho-analysis gives us is, indeed, quite definite on this point. On the whole, it says, we do ourselves harm by repressing the primitive instincts and desires with which our mind is stored. We should be true to ourselves as we are, gratify these instincts, and follow the path of 'self-expression'. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die" is the only conclusion at which we can arrive if psycho-analysis is correct.

### *Is this Materialist Theory True?*

But, as we have already seen, neither Behaviourist nor psycho-analyst can admit that their teaching will bring about these results, for, if they did so, it would be an admission that man, after all, is the 'captain of his soul', and that ideas do create events.

Is man's conduct affected by his beliefs? The question is vital, for if the answer is in the affirmative any spread of the irrationalist doctrine will help to determine the nature of the coming civilization.

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If the existence of reason, and therefore of intelligence, is denied, we shall be threatened with reversion from a semi-intelligent to an unintelligent order.

Does the experience of human history confirm or refute the materialist claim that ideas do not cause public events?

When Christianity flooded the world it brought with it a set of values which were a challenge to existing conceptions. It was not the rich and the powerful who counted most; the poor and the weak were the direct heirs of the kingdom of heaven. We need not pause in this context to consider how far this teaching became adulterated in practice, once Christianity was adopted as the official religion of European society. We should look rather at the abbeys and churches which were built and the monastic orders which were founded, or we should trace the growing power of the Church and the Papacy in political affairs and in secular life. We are then confronted with an indisputable fact: namely, that Christian belief transformed Europe and determined the whole structure of mediaeval civilization. It may, of course, be urged that Europe became Christian only because of certain economic events, and we may say that it is as hopeless to decide whether ideas cause events or *vice versa*, as whether the hen or the egg comes first. Yet if we consider the men who first preached the Christian gospel, we shall hardly maintain that they were influenced by any economic changes, for in the

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early days of Christianity no such change had come about. The people who accepted Christianity certainly did not foresee the social changes it was going to create.

We might take, as a further example, the teaching of modern psychology which we have just been considering, and ask ourselves how far the doctrine of self-expression has led to the reaction from Victorian world standards. And even if, once again, we hold that it has had no such result and that social events alone brought about the reaction and caused people to jump at the gospel of Freud as a justification for their conduct, we shall hardly be prepared to claim that Freud did not think out his doctrine first.

In fact, we arrive at this conclusion: economic and social events may, and undoubtedly do, provide the environment which may be favourable to certain doctrines. But the doctrine is the result of an intellectual process in the mind of its first propounder. And therefore, however much events and the acceptance of ideas interact upon one another, the original ideas seem to be arrived at irrespectively of any social or economic influences.

### *The Self-contradiction of the Irrationalist Theory*

But let us for a moment test from another angle the truth of the doctrine that men's ideas are caused entirely by the kind of physical mechanism of which they are made up, or by the irrational process on which psycho-analysis lays stress.

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How can this doctrine be true? On its own showing it cannot be proved to be true, for there is no such reality as truth. If I believe in Christianity merely because my glands are of a certain quality, or because a nurse happened to box my ears when I was in the perambulator, then Dr. Watson is a Behaviourist from precisely the same kind of causes, so that there is no more reason for supposing his doctrine is more true than mine. As Mr. C. E. M. Joad very pertinently puts it, "If Behaviourism is correct in what it asserts, the doctrine of Behaviourism reflects nothing but a particular condition of the bodies of Behaviourists. Similarly, rival theories of psychology merely reflect the conditions prevailing in the bodies of rival psychologists. To ask which of the different theories is true is as meaningless as to ask which of the various blood pressures of the theorists concerned is true."\*

There seems to be no ultimate escape from the dilemma which the apostles of materialism have created. The fact that they bring forward these conclusions and assert them to be more accurate than rival psychological theories is a glaring contradiction of their own teaching. On their own showing they only think as they do because they are a particular type of machine; and, conversely, if they claim that their theories are accurate and that people whose bodies are made differently ought to be convinced of their accuracy, that is an admission

\* *A Guide to Modern Thought.*

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that men are able to think rationally, that some theories can be adjudged as more true and accurate than others, and therefore that their own theories are false.

### *How far the Materialist Doctrine is True*

This contradiction is so obvious that you may be tempted to imagine that these materialist dogmas are the result of the kind of madness which the gods were supposed to inflict on men when they wanted to destroy them.

Anyhow, you will probably agree that this kind of teaching is much more a symptom of our dying civilization than of the civilization which is on the threshold of birth. It reflects intellectual decadence rather than the intellectual inspiration which should precede the dawn of a new order. It suggests the last pages of an old chapter rather than the first paragraphs of a new.

But we shall make a great mistake if we jump to the conclusion that these kind of materialists are mad. They are quite serious and intelligent men. And they are propounding something which contains a good deal of truth. For events and environment and bodily conditions affect our thoughts, but they do not create them.

Suppose that someone shuts you up in a cupboard and starves you for forty-eight hours. At the end of that time the unpleasant economic situation in which you will find yourself will certainly influence your

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outlook on life. You will no longer feel a desperate interest as to whether Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays, or whether Britain can be persuaded to adopt the duo-decimal system; what you will care about is whether you can get a bite of bread and a drink of water. The economic conditions will colour your mind, but they will not create new convictions. However hungry you are, you will not suddenly begin to believe that, after all, the earth is flat, or that the British are a lost tribe of Israel. You will probably be quite willing to profess either of these creeds if only you can get hold of some food, but there will be no conviction behind such professions of faith.

The Marxist dialectical theory, as it is called, is therefore an extremely useful contribution to the interpretation of history. Economic events have affected men's beliefs. The economic needs of the moment have been largely responsible for the popular acceptance of some new theory. Protestantism, for instance, undoubtedly spread because a moral justification was required for the advent of individualist capitalism and the open market. But to say that the open market created Protestantism is to leap to a nonsensical extreme. A doctrine becomes popular when it harmonizes with the temper and requirements of the moment. But the doctrine itself is a result of a quite independent mental process. It is impossible seriously to believe that Luther was led to denounce the Papacy because

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Feudalism was beginning to break down; even if we were prepared to believe this about Luther, we should have to explain why Wycliffe had begun to preach the same kind of doctrine before 'Feudalism' had shown signs of collapse.

If our reasoning powers are coloured, much more than we had supposed, by our instincts and impulses, our instincts and impulses are also toned by our reasoning powers. If our bodies act on our minds—a proposition which none of us will deny—our minds act on our bodies. We should always be suspicious of those who preach the existence of one set of factors but ignore the existence of counter-balancing or opposite factors.

The extreme theories of psychology suffer from this defect. They recognize the influence of material, physical, and economic conditions on human affairs, and fail to reckon with the existence of an opposite polar influence. Yet, if material conditions affect human behaviour, we must expect to discover a magnet operating from a contrary (non-material) direction.

In any case, we realize that we have at every moment of our conscious lives to act as though we possessed minds, as though we could control our actions by our minds, and as though we had within limits a free will to exercise a rational choice. That, indeed, may be advanced as a good, practical proof that there is a radical fallacy in the irrationalist theory.

## CHAPTER II

### *Must God Go?*

ALL Marxian Communists assume that religious belief is part of the capitalist culture and will therefore disappear with it.

If religion is taken as being synonymous with religious observance there is plenty of evidence to suggest that religion is within the capitalist culture and is decaying with it. We know from personal experience how small a proportion of the population go regularly to church, probably not more than one in forty-five. But churchgoing is not a very satisfactory test by which to distinguish religious from non-religious people. Some of us, no doubt, have friends who describe themselves as Christians but who take no part in public worship. Obviously, the better test is to discover what the majority believe, classifying their beliefs on the basis of the rough definition as to the difference between the religious and the secularist creed which has already been advanced.

In his interesting chapter on religion John Strachey discusses the decay of religion. But he omits one question. He never asks whether religion is true; he does not offer a single reason for assuming that it has been proved untrue. This is a curious omission, for if religion is true it cannot be confined to a



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dying culture: it is transcendent to any one phase of social order. It may, and probably will, take new forms in a new civilization, but it is not likely to disappear, because, so far as we can see, a truth once revealed or discovered does not disappear. It persists, in spite of changing orders and new fashions.

### *The Agnostic Attitude*

But does religion represent this eternal reality? Does it possess the secret of life? In all ages there have been sceptics to whom its doctrines seemed unconvincing and shallow. The agnostic attitude is no modern invention. But there is an added incentive to-day for the conclusion that all attempts to explain the infinite are mere human inventions. Modern physics have demonstrated that the world which we perceive does not in the least resemble the real world. The chairs we sit in, the rocks we climb, the earth on which we build are not solid substances composed of billiard-ball atoms; substance is made up of atoms, and the atom may be likened, not to a minute billiard ball, but to a solar system with a nucleus of positive electricity round which negative electricity rotates irregularly. Matter is a 'mush in space-time'.\*

The elusiveness of matter and the fact that our perceptions are so misleading are some excuse for

\* Joad's *Guide to Modern Thought*.

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intellectual despair. The ultimate realities, agnostics declare, cannot be known, and it is no use trying to discover them. Nature, however, will not allow us to remain agnostic. If we are thinking people we shall continue to wonder what life means, and we shall assume that, even if the explanation eludes us, the explanation is there—waiting to be discovered. Indeed, it is this restless determination to discover more, this human refusal to remain apathetic, which is the inspiration to scientific research and which leads to the extension of knowledge, even if, in the process, it involves continual mistakes and false assumptions.

## *Was the Universe Designed?*

Thus, we cannot remain indifferent as to the fundamental issue whether the universe is intelligent in itself and reveals an intelligent design, whether it is unfriendly, or whether it is indifferent and no more than a mechanism.

We ask, but must not expect to arrive at an absolute answer to such profound questions. If there were self-evident certainties no case whatever for materialism would exist. I do not believe materialism to be a true explanation, but I recognize that a strong case can be made out for it.

There is a good deal of conflicting evidence in the universe. There is evidence of cruelty in nature and of unintelligent design—assuming that there is any design at all. Let us first consider whether there

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is any design, and deal later with the question of its good or bad character.

If there is no design it means that everything which is now in existence must have come into existence on the principle of mechanical cause and effect; or else if, as some philosophers have maintained, there is no such reality as cause and effect, that everything which now exists happened by chance and not as a result of any kind of scheme or purpose. On the first of these theories there must have been a solar system and a London Transport Board and the gas-cooker in our kitchen, for, if the chain of causes could have led to any other organization than that which exists, it means that Someone or Something was free to decide that it should be this organization which was to come into existence and not some other.

Let us suppose that our order was an inevitable consequence of the chain of causes. There must in that case either have been a First Cause which led inevitably to the existing complicated order, or else there must always have been a chain of causes and the material universe had no beginning. If there was a First Cause, what created it? Why did it evolve mind and life? If it were really a First Cause, it would be self-created—that is to say, it must have always been in existence. But why, if it was existing for all eternity, did it wait for a given moment to begin to unfold from itself the chain of causes which made the universe? And if we slightly

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amend the proposition and maintain that the universe itself was always in existence and that it could not have existed in any other way than that which has produced the present order, why did it not lead to the present order earlier? It should have done so, for it had all eternity to work in. However, we may safely reject this theory as being so improbable as to be beyond the pale, for modern science assures us that the material universe will have an end. And if it is to have an end, we may argue that it had a beginning, for it is within time.

### *Emergent Evolution*

The materialist explanation of the origin of the universe is so unlikely that it has been abandoned by the majority of thinking men; it does not seem to them credible that the original protoplasm should have contained, like an acorn, the nucleus that has produced the Milky Way and Woolworths and the League of Nations. There is no escape from this far-fetched proposition on strict materialist lines, for orthodox materialism holds that there can be nothing in the result which was not potentially present in the cause. Most intellectual non-theists, however, now hold what is called the doctrine of emergent or creative evolution. Stated in popular form this means that there is a mysterious force in evolution which adds qualities not present in the causes. Thus, to take a simple instance, neither hydrogen nor oxygen are wet; but, when they mingle,

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they produce water which has this new quality of wetness.

On the emergence theory we imagine this force starting from jelly-like protoplasm and gradually pushing its way forward until it develops life, the intricate organism of the animal, and the still more intricate organism of human intelligence. It will go on, climbing up and up, to develop forms and beings of which we have at present no conception. This theory avoids a good many of the difficulties which both atheistic materialism and theism encounter. It suggests, for example, an explanation for the apparent imperfections in creation: the antediluvian monsters were a first attempt at animal life, a grotesque and rather amateur effort which had eventually to be scrapped. What seems to be such prodigal waste in the universe, the creation of myriad stars which appear to serve no useful purpose, can be explained on the same ground. The cruelties and imperfections of nature are mistakes, and the desolate stars are discarded experiments. Only gradually does the creative force learn to be more successful in its art.

It is not theism. But in some respects this emergent force is like God. It must be a highly intelligent force, for even on the lowest estimate the universe is a marvellous achievement. And, like God, emergent evolution must have been free to choose and therefore to design. If it did not choose, we are back again at the materialist proposition, that the present

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order and no other must have developed, a proposition which is quite incompatible with the theory that the force has continually been making experiments. We shall appreciate that it is really a poverty of imagination which supposes that the present order is the only one which could have come into existence. Most of us have enough imagination to realize that there is no limit to the alternative designs which might have evolved: something quite different to life or mind or matter might have resulted, so that we are bound to hold that this creative evolution has not only a persistence but a freedom in selecting one particular result rather than another.

But it is not theism. The force is really God in the making, a God who is not perfect, who commits bad mistakes, and who is struggling against immense odds. The moment we hear that it is struggling against odds we shall probably see one of the flaws in this theory. If this force is struggling against odds, what created the odds? If, as the exponents of this theory generally explain, it is life struggling against the dead-weight of matter, what created matter? Again, if this life-force or creative energy is the First Cause and was there always, beyond time, why was it for so long impotent? If it was not always there, what created it? If it is immanent in the material universe, and if the material universe is doomed to extinction, it must also be within time; but in that case it cannot have existed from eternity.

These are not difficulties which arise because of

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our lack of comprehension ; they are contradictions, and therefore we must assume that there is something wrong in the theory. A First Cause must be transcendent, outside time. And therefore it, or He, cannot be in a state of becoming.

#### *The Theist Theory is More Reasonable*

It may seem odd if, in days when Communist and many Socialist intellectuals assume that theistic religion is a superstition which will disappear in the new culture, we come back to the view that theism is the more reasonable explanation of the universe. The secularist takes it so completely for granted that theistic religion is merely a dope that he scarcely bothers to consider whether it has a case. And yet when we take the trouble to look into the question we find that theism has a greater intellectual claim on our reason than atheism—or pantheism, which is really the category into which the emergent evolution theory falls.

It is not a question of weighing one theory against another, neither of which can be judged because they deal with issues which lie beyond our comprehension : it is a question simply of the fundamental axiom that a First Cause must be outside time. As there may still be some doubt about that, let us once again examine the argument.

However the universe has evolved it must have started with something from which to evolve—assuming that there is any such law as cause and

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effect. If there was no beginning and no First Cause, but only a chain of cause and effect stretching back eternally into the ages for ever, the present order of existence, to use a mixed metaphor, ought to have appeared 'long ago', for the universe is really timeless; or else we should have to suppose, as some people do indeed maintain, that evolution repeats itself in endless circles, so that all that exists now has existed an infinite number of times before. That would mean that when I had my tooth stopped the other day I had had the same tooth stopped in precisely the same circumstances a billion billion times, and the same thunderstorm took place at the same hour and the same place in every aeon-circle. This does not seem very probable, and indeed all scientific evidence seems to point to the impossibility of such a state of affairs; for if what is called the second law of thermodynamics is true, and the universe is running downhill towards complete annihilation, there will be nothing left from which to start again. No prospect could certainly be more gloomy than the idea that we had to go on reliving our lives for ever, and always recurrently doing the same thing.

If this theory is not true, the only alternative is the theory that Something was always in existence. Therefore that Something is outside time and outside the universe which evolved from it. And, unless the present order is the only order which could have evolved, Something chose one set of consequences



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rather than another, and worked therefore on scheme which was comparatively intelligent.

The theist doctrine fits in with these axiom for it supposes a God to exist outside time and outside—transcendent to—the universe. As we have noted already, it is more likely that there is Something—or that there are ‘universes’—behind the material universe, than that the material universe is the sole reality. It is more likely because we observe that reality tends to stretch beyond the horizon of our imaginations.

### *Difficulties as to the Theist Explanation*

But theism also has to contend against a number of difficulties. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the universe cannot be the creation of an intelligent and a good God. Pain and cruelty seem to be inherent in nature, and even if we rule out a proportion of these evils as being due to human action, and say that man is permitted by God to cause suffering for some reason which may be good we are still faced with the phenomenon of cruelty in nature. Animals prey upon and torture one another, and many of them appear to be victims of acute pain. Some creatures seem to be grotesquely designed. There are pests of insects which appear only to exist in order to cause destruction. The astronomical universe suggests a prodigal waste if science is correct in supposing that few, if any of the stars accommodate any form of life, although

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they are subject to the same natural laws which govern this world and under which our form of life has become possible.

The impression which most of us are forced to draw of the universe is not that it is unfriendly or malign, but that it is made up of titanic, blundering, blind forces which are utterly callous of human or animal happiness. An earthquake suddenly destroys a city and thousands of innocent people lose their lives. A trivial act of irresponsibility like eating a piece of underdone pork may result in the creeping agony of trichinosis. Selfish and useless human beings may enjoy good health till old age, while it is often the good man, bringing great happiness into the lives of others, who is struck down by a fatal disease. Some of these misfortunes man may be able to overcome in the future. But these phenomena do not, superficially at least, suggest an intelligent or beneficent scheme any more than does the prodigal wastefulness of nature—the extravagant fertility of species of plants and animals which would reduce the world to chaos if they were not restricted.

It will, however, be realized that the constancy of nature is apparently the only environment for human activity, and certainly for human moral purpose. Our efforts would be paralysed if the cosmos was a chaos. And the kind of catastrophe which we have been considering is due to this constant process. If my house is wrecked by an earthquake and I am injured, it means that a natural

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process has crossed my path. My misfortune is due to the constancy of nature, not to the whim of an angry God.

And evil, we must remember, is but one side of the picture. On the other side we are faced with the amazing ability of design: we remember what appears to us as the beauty and majesty of nature—the exquisite tints of spring, the glory even of fading autumn and barren winter, the radiance of sunrise. In many respects it is a beautiful and kindly world. Above all, we must reckon with the fact that goodness and truth seem to be magnets to which the intelligence of man responds. There is some force in the universe which impels him to gain greater knowledge, to strive to create, to climb higher up the ladder.

It is not enough to explain this on the ground that it is the spirit of life within himself which impels man. What has designed the spirit of life to turn in this direction? The geography of the universe must be such that creativeness—not destructiveness, goodness—not evil, truth—not falsity, are the sources of man's inspiration.

It is this which suggests a theist rather than a pantheist interpretation. The material universe, we have agreed, is not sufficiently intelligent or good to account for the magnetism towards good by which human consciousness is affected; the material universe is actuated by blind rather than intelligent forces. Nor can the urge towards good be accounted for as due to something within man; there appears

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to be something outside and greater than himself towards which he strives, and with which he feels he can act in harmony.

### *Are Values Real?*

The challenge which the sceptic advances in reply to this argument of the human sense of values is interesting and worthy of careful attention. It is a denial of the reality of values. Exterior objects or ideals, he says, appear to man to be good or true merely because man's mechanism so works that this impression is created in his brain. The fugues of Bach are not in themselves beautiful, for there is no such absolute quality as beauty: they sound beautiful, when performed, only because our nervous system happens to be satisfied by the vibrations they set up. Their value is subjective and relative, not objective or absolute.

Let us grant that the theory of values is no more than a theory, a theory which attempts to explain human experience. Yet the materialist counter-explanation is no less a theory: it can advance no certain proofs in its support. Moreover, even if we accept the materialist explanation, it does not on examination vindicate the materialist dogma. If I consider a sunset to be beautiful because I am so constructed that the sight of a sunset gives me pleasure, it means that I am so constructed as to appreciate, to be temperamentally in accord with, such phenomena of the universe as sunsets. There are,

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in fact, certain features in the universe which evoke in me emotional or intellectual response. Not only does the vision of a sunset stir me, but there are other influences which cause me to desire fuller knowledge, to undertake scientific research, or to strive toward the good life (as I choose to call it). But that is precisely the theist claim, namely, that there is something in the universe outside man to which he responds because he corresponds. Indeed, the more man's consciousness of good and beauty and truth is stressed as a subjective process, the more is the theory vindicated that the human sense of reality reflects the pattern of the objective universe.

## *The Evidence of Religious Experience*

Many people have never encountered what is called 'religious experience'. But though we may have a very vague idea as to what mysticism means, we shall not associate it merely with that cold shiver down the spine which maiden ladies feel when they sing a favourite hymn. Some mystics have been men of outstanding intelligence. And though it is quite possible to dismiss their evidence as being due simply to imagination, it is remarkable that, in spite of their differences in nationality, character, historical environment and religious creed, they all come back with the same story. They tell us, in fact, that they have reached a level of consciousness in which they are caught up into the spirit of the universe; they catch a glimpse of God. Naturally, they find

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it impossible to define the results of their experience; but they unanimously declare that there is a Reality, far greater than anything they had imagined, in this country which is hidden from us, and that this Reality is good. Even the cruder forms of religious experience testify to this. The Buchmanite who places himself at the disposal of the Spirit is aware of a new significance in the events of life: things happen in a different way, there is a power working with him. This experience may be expressed in crude form, but it is part of the same witness. We may call it 'cosmic consciousness', or 'conversion', or what we will. The interest of it is that it is a unanimous witness.

Psycho-analysts reply that these experiences are due merely to the desire of the mystic to feel that he is surrounded by a kind universe; it is the child's craving for a father, so that he eventually persuades himself that he has become conscious of a Heavenly Father. But there is not the remotest evidence for supposing that this is a valid explanation. Because the desire for a father is there, it does not in the least prove that the experience is merely a result of the desire and therefore an illusion. You may lie in bed in the early morning, before you have pulled back the curtains before your window, and you may be intensely anxious that it shall be a fine day; yet when you pull back the curtains and see that the sun is rising over the hills and that there is not a cloud in the sky, it would be ludicrous to suppose

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that you are merely experiencing the vision of fine day because of your wishes. What so many pontifical psychologists fail to realize is that because they may accurately diagnose our emotions it does not follow that our experiences are caused by our emotions.

#### *Is the Universe Good or Bad, or Both?*

The problem which now confronts us is how to account for these two sides of the picture, how to relate God to the imperfections and evils of the universe. And the question which then arises is which is greater—the unintelligence and evil or the good values? We cannot be in any doubt as to the ultimate answer, however discouraging it may be for our immediate adventures. The story of evolution is that mind is fighting a winning battle. Man, we know, has only been in existence for a short period, but he has succeeded in reducing the wilderness to some sort of order. He may still be powerless against the tornado and the volcanic eruption, but he has harnessed many of the elements for his own use. He is conquering disease. His knowledge is extending. And the importance of this answer is far-reaching. For once again it suggests that the 'architecture' of the universe is such that truth is ultimately a greater force than error, good than evil. This is the fundamental reason for believing in God, for it implies that not only is there a force which is winning its way through, but that

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life has been constituted a force which can win its way through; and that the universe has been built in such a way that the higher values mark the direction of achievement.

The reason why theism seems more probable than pantheism is that pantheism is incomplete, since it leaves these phenomena unexplained; while theism both contains the pantheist explanation and goes on to account for the ultimate superiority of intelligence. The pantheist God cannot be wholly intelligent or good; there is too much failure and evil in the universe. But a God who is behind or above the material universe, as well as within the life of the material universe, becomes a goal towards which man is striving. I do not suggest that this proposition is self-evident; it is extremely difficult to relate God to the material universe. We can only dimly imagine why He has allowed imperfections and evils to exist. But theism does not contradict the emergent evolution theory. The picture which it draws is that of life experimenting, failing, retiring, and then advancing, very gradually and painfully winning its way forward. On the theist explanation, God has allowed this process, and this process is part of Himself. Theism opens up to us the conception of a reality which is not confined to the physical universe, but stretches out beyond those narrow bounds and beyond our farthest imagination. The mystery of evil, the imperfections of the scheme, suffering and pain remain. But these realities justify disbelief in



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the existence of God only if we assume that the material universe is the complete reality. Once we concede the possibility of a reality beyond this world these disturbing phenomena become relative rather than absolute.

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## CHAPTER III

### *Will Christianity Survive?*

IN attempting to form any conclusion as to whether Christianity will perish with Capitalism or whether it will survive all forms of civilization, we are necessarily confronted with the question whether it is true or false. If it is false it may, like many other superstitions, take a long time to die. But if it is true we may reasonably conclude that it will not be unseated by any changes in the social and economic structure.

Many people, if asked whether Christianity will go on or go under in the new civilization, would reply that it has gone under already. That answer may sound a little too glib to be convincing. But it has some justification, for, as we have already agreed, if we take an informal census of any of our own social cliques we can hardly deny that, in these latter days of capitalist civilization, it is rare rather than usual to find a normal young man or woman who is an ardent Catholic or Protestant, or the adherent of any other religious movement. And if it is accurate to say that institutional Christianity represents at the present time a sect rather than the bulk of the nation, it may seem exceedingly unlikely that there will be any Christian revival in the coming civilization. No doubt the Church has her

foundations too deeply rooted in the past to disappear altogether—anyhow for several generations to come. But it may be argued that there do not seem to be any signs that she will regain the dominant position which she once occupied.

This drift from institutional religion has, indeed, been one of the most interesting symptoms of modern times. We are so accustomed to the secularist conventions of to-day that we may not realize how great a change in social behaviour this drift constitutes. But we have only to look back at any nineteenth-century diary to see that Sunday morning church-going was a regular part of the programme of all but the poorest class. To-day this habit has passed so entirely out of the time-table that few people trouble to ask why the development has come about. They take it for granted that organized religion no longer seriously counts.

*Has Christ Lost Influence?*

It is worth while probing this question a little farther, for it will help us to form an opinion as to whether the new civilization is likely to be affected by specifically Christian influences or will follow the example of Russian Communism. Is this drift from Church a reaction from the principles of Christianity or only from organized Christianity? Most of us will admit that, in the Western world at least, no one has had so great an influence as Christ. Is His influence waning?

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Why has Christ made such an impression on Europeans throughout the last twenty centuries? The answer, in the main, is that His life and His teaching stand out as essentially pure and good. No one denies that there have been other pure gospels in the works of the Greek philosophers and in the sayings of Eastern mystics. But the influence of Christ has not been lessened because there have been others who anticipated His moral standards. For it is not that His moral claims were original: it is rather that they seem to us to be as perfect as anything we can imagine. If anything equals them, nothing surpasses them. And they are startling, even if they are not original, for they throw a vivid and uncomfortably searching light on the most exalted standards of ordinary human practice.

It is significant that the only genuine opposition to Christ's gospel comes from critics such as Nietzsche. Any complete rejection of Christian ethics reveals a species of intellectual savagery, the crushing of the weak by the strong and an old-fashioned dictatorial dictatorship of the powerful. We shall hardly be tempted to ally ourselves to that cause.

Nor are we likely to be troubled by the reflection that a number of interpolations may have crept into the scriptural record, as we have it, so that the original Christ is buried under a mass of later comment. For if the canvas of the portrait has been tampered with, it is the more remarkable that the

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figure of Christ still stands out distinctly. The original must be all the more striking to have survived this treatment.

### *The Significance of Christ's Example*

But you may reply that although you recognize the value of Christ as a moral example and are prepared to accept His ethical standard, you cannot possibly bring yourself to believe that He possesses any divine claim.

If you say this, I suspect that there may be misunderstanding in your mind as to what this divine claim involves. Let us see where we have arrived at this stage of our inquiry. We came to the conclusion in the last chapter that theism is a more probable explanation of creation than any of its alternatives: that is to say, that the universe suggests there is an Intelligent and Good God, outside and yet related to the material world. If there is such a God, we should expect to discover some manifestation of His presence. What form should we expect this manifestation to take?

We have answered this question already, for we have agreed that the qualities of intelligence and goodness and truth are the sign-posts which point the direction to God. We should therefore expect to find that, if God is not entirely hidden in the clouds, these are the first signs by which we should know Him. Those signs are what impressed the contemporaries of Christ in the first instance. Christ

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taught as if He had some queer sort of authority. It was not an authority of the schoolmaster type, but an authority which was convincing precisely because of the goodness of His life and His teaching. Goodness, when we meet it, has this curious compelling influence. People who are really good acquire a respect which no other quality inspires to the same extent. They may be poor and unintellectual, but their goodness, if it is genuine, is an immense compelling force. The whole world, secularist as well as Christian, paid tribute to Francis of Assisi in the recent commemorations. Even fire-eating militarists have a sneaking regard for those Quakers who have fearlessly lived up to their pacifist convictions. And I can remember the funeral of Father Stanton, an Anglican curate in a slum church, when the traffic of London was held up on a week-day in Holborn, Kingsway, and Waterloo Bridge, and when the people lined those streets twenty deep, as though it were a royal procession—simply because they knew the man had been a saint.

It is this goodness in Christ which has convinced humanity throughout the ages. For it was not a one-sided goodness. Christ fasted and prayed, but He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He suffered His scourging and crucifixion without complaint, but He drove the money-changers from the Temple. He insisted on unqualified purity, but He made a friend of Mary Magdalene. By these and countless other incidents, as well as by the integrity

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of His message, He has endeared Himself to men. It is probably true that Christ's example as a man is acknowledged no less to-day than in any other generation. From this—human—point of view therefore, His influence has not lessened. Where He is officially rejected—as in atheist Russia—He is dethroned only by means of a propaganda which links Him—by the most unblushing of travesties—to the rich capitalists and the war-mongers.

If we regard Christ as an ideally good man, we have seen in Him the outline of His claim to divinity. For, as we have agreed, the spiritual values of goodness and love and truth point the way to divinity. But we shall have seen no more than an outline of His claim. For the Incarnation is not a doctrinal accretion: it is the principle by which Christianity stands or falls.

When we come to examine what the Incarnation means, we shall admit its significance, even if we do not admit its truth. For if there is a God at all, He is not merely transcendent, outside or behind the material universe: if He were without and not within, He could not be infinite. If He is absolute He must comprehend the physical order, and therefore we should be aware of some manifestation of His presence. The Incarnation is indeed the pledge of His inseparable relationship with humanity. We must not allow ourselves to suppose, as a result of what we have heard or read, that the doctrine of the Incarnation means that God has never at any

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other time or place revealed Himself. The Christian meaning of the Incarnation is that Christ was the focus-point of all divine manifestation. If the Incarnation is true, it is the guarantee, not the denial, of the eternal immanence of God.

### *Why the Church Fails to Appeal to Men*

It is strange, then, that although Christ is admired and respected by the majority of modern men and women, the religion which bears His name is largely rejected, anyhow in its formal expression. What is the reason for this anomaly? If we can discover the answer to that question we shall be in a better position to estimate whether anything representing Christianity will find a place in the new civilization.

I must again insist that just as the first part of this book was not an exhaustive economic treatise, so the second part is not a Christian apologetic. I shall have to confine myself to the merest outline and set out under four heads the reasons why people, who place some sort of value on Christ, place insufficient value on Christianity to label themselves as Christians.

Three of these reasons are intellectual in character, and one is popular or temperamental. Although the intellectual objections necessarily go deeper, I prefer to let them give place to the popular objection. For this objection, as the term 'popular' implies, is much more widespread and immediate.

This objection arises from the associations with



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which organized Christianity is linked in many people's minds. When they think of the Church whether in the Catholic or Protestant or any other sense, an image arises in their thoughts of dreary services and sentimental hymns; of the faint scent of pinewood pews or musty dampness; of either emotional parsons, or very hearty parsons, grinding out platitudes or being aggressively dogmatic; of sour-faced spinster ladies who subscribe to convert the heathen and also to the suppression of love-making in the public parks; of conventional white-collared black-coated sidesmen who show us to our pew and collect the alms and probably support the local Rotary.

Different forms of religion may awaken variations on this theme. Thus, those whose traditions are Roman Catholic or Anglo-Catholic will think rather of painted statues, and clusters of candles, and a string of elaborately tabulated dogmas. Those who come of Nonconformist stock will recall hell-fire and rompy hymn-tunes. But whatever our religious heredity, we tend probably to visualize the Church as a kill-joy, repressive influence. Even if we come of a Catholic stock and were never forbidden to play games on Sunday, we may regard the orthodox Catholic's attitude towards sex problems, like divorce or birth-control, as adamantly puritan.

That is the picture. Official Christianity represents in the popular imagination, a mental backwater, a sectional attitude to life with which men feel no

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affinity. Moreover, it seems to be a sectional attitude which possesses no capacity to give guidance on the problems with which the human race at a particular period may be confronted. In the Great War the clergy of no denomination gave an effectual lead: they blessed colours and spoke in the prevailing language of 1914. No Church saw what most people have since realized, that war is a monstrous evil, a perversion of all Christian ideals. There is little doubt that the attitude of the Church in the war has done her incalculable harm; and there are many critics who blame her for being apparently unable to give any effectual guidance to-day as to whether pacifism or international police war is the true Christian policy.

To the average men and women attendance at church on a fine Sunday morning would seem almost as uninspiring as to go and sit in a family vault. If they want intelligent ideas they read or go to the lecture-room: they do not listen to sermons. If they feel the need of music they go to the concert: not to hear the choir sing anthems. If they want to worship God and feel His presence they motor out to the hill-country or sit alone in their gardens: they do not look for Him in a stuffy building. If they want individual advice and guidance they go to their friends, or possibly to a psycho-analyst: they do not go to the confessional. The Church means nothing to them, for they feel she has nothing to give them. She is the relic of a dead tradition.

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### *Religious Principles can be Expressed in Various Forms*

But, however accurate popular estimates on this score may be, where do they lead us? They do not necessarily lead us to the conclusion that religion will disappear in the new civilization: they tend rather to show that, if religion is to survive, it will have to take a new form. Probably the majority of people imagine that religion is committed to its present form. John Strachey makes that mistake. He emphasises the changed form which Christianity took when Capitalism succeeded Feudalism. He explains the significance of individualist Protestantism in the dawn of the capitalist era. He insists that Catholicism to some extent underwent a change. But it does not seem to occur to him that just as, for better or worse, Christianity on these occasions showed itself capable of taking new forms, it could do so again.

A religion must be capable of expressing itself in an infinite number of forms. The people who do not realize this are people who cannot distinguish between the principles of a religion and the manner in which those principles are expressed. Some Christians hold that a particular form in which the principles of Christianity are expressed—such as the Catholic form of a Rule of Life and the Mass—is part of the sacred revelation, and that it would therefore be disastrous if any other form were adopted. But that does not remove the distinction

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between principle and form; for, as no Catholic will deny, Protestantism was another form in which Christianity expressed itself, however heretical and mistaken and misleading that particular form, in his opinion, has proved itself to be.

#### *Christ and Christian Theology*

Sometimes this popular objection arises in a more intellectual context. Many people, for instance, urge that though they are prepared to admit the truth of Christ's teaching, they cannot possibly accept many of the dogmas of the Christian creed, which seem to them elaborate interpolations, quite foreign to Christ's original message. It is not my task here to defend or even examine Christian theology, except incidentally. I am anxious only to insist that the principle of this particular objection is the same, and the answer is the same as that which I have already suggested. Christ left His work and His message to be carried out by human agency. A human agency was to interpret the message in order to hand it down, and a human agency is always liable to make mistakes. Not the strictest orthodox believer will deny that Christians have made bad mistakes. But however much the interpretation which we call 'theology' may be criticized, that interpretation must not be confused with the religion which has been interpreted. It may be difficult to trace the exact distinction between Christ's original teaching and the theology which has developed from it, but we must

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not forget that there is a distinction. And, therefore, we shall not fall into the error of supposing that because we see flaws and imperfections in the Christian organization—whether in the details or associations of the institution, or the details of theological interpretation—that Christianity will not survive. If this type of objection is well founded it means, or it may mean, only that Christianity in the new age must express itself in a different way.

We shall appreciate that some organization is inevitable. There must be a Church. A Christianity which was entirely individual would be departing not merely from its human traditions but from its own vital principles. The emphasis which Christ laid was not only on the personal but also on the communal responsibility of His followers. If there is a Fatherhood, there must be a brotherhood. The unit from the Christian standpoint is not the self but all mankind.

### *Is God a Being to Whom one can Pray?*

We now pass to quite a different type of objection to Christianity. Many people will urge that, although they are prepared to admire the goodness of Christ and to admit His claim to be a supreme moral teacher, they are not thereby admitting a belief in Christianity. They will urge that their scepticism is not due to any confusion between Christianity and Christ: it is an objection to some of the cardinal

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features of Christ's own recorded teaching. Because He lived so pure and sympathetic a life, and the ethical side of His message was so convincingly ideal, that does not prove that other aspects of His teaching were not mistaken.

In particular, they may doubt the authenticity of that picture of God which Christ drew so uncompromisingly. Christ represented the universe, not as a clumsy machine which is rather dangerously indifferent to man, but as the Kingdom of a Father—a Father who cares for each of His children, and Who may even be addressed in prayer. There is no doubt that Christ was insistent on this conception of God as a Heavenly Father—not occasionally, but perpetually—in His Gospel. He Himself prayed to this Father, and He taught His disciples to pray. He identified Himself as representing the Father. It would be a misnomer, therefore, to term as Christian any belief which does not embody this fundamentally Christian conception.

But before this ground is adopted for maintaining that Christianity is untrustworthy, we should bear two considerations in mind. The first is that no one denies, or has ever denied, that if there is a God He is infinite and is in His entirety beyond our powers of conception. And therefore, when Christ spoke of Him as Father, He was speaking symbolically; that is to say, He did not mean that God was a person and a father in the literal human sense, or that His own relationship to this Father as the Son of God

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was to be taken as if it were a literal human relationship.

The Fatherhood of God is a symbol. But is it an inaccurate or misleading symbol? We cannot quarrel with the symbol if we agree that God is supreme intelligence and that the values of goodness and truth are the direction-signals to His nature. If He is the First Cause from which all creation springs, Fatherhood is no misleading symbol. If He is the supreme intelligence and goodness, and the universe, even though it has been allowed to strive towards its own salvation on the 'emergence' theory, is part of His intelligent scheme, He is concerned with its most significant detail. Fatherhood, therefore, is an accurate image of that conception.

The conception of a divine Fatherhood, however, raises further difficulties. They are difficulties which I believe to be extremely prevalent at the present time, and they are fundamental in character. Can we accept the theory of a 'personal' God? Can we believe in a God so personal that He can be addressed in prayer and will alter the course of events if we pray fervently enough?

That conception may be comforting, it will be said, to simple-minded people, but it will not bear serious investigation. If God's purpose can be swayed to any extent by human petitions, it means that He has not worked out a purpose or made up His mind. When a congregation is asked to pray for a drought to end, it implies that if these prayers were not

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offered no rain would fall, or that if we had not prayed for the recovery of a sick man God would have allowed that man to die. For if a cyclonic disturbance was already on its way, if the invalid would in any case have recovered, what was the purpose of the prayers? Extraordinarily difficult situations arise when different people are asking God for contrary results: as when, in the late war, Germans and British were equally interceding for victory. How does God decide? If God had all the time decided to grant victory to the Allies, were not the prayers on both sides a sheer waste of energy?

This type of rational criticism arises if prayer is conceived as a process of wringing favours out of God. That is the reason, I suppose, why most people have ceased to pray, for among the great majority of men and women praying has gone out of fashion as much as Bible-reading. Some people may have a moment's desperate recourse to prayer when an agonizing crisis overwhelms them; but probably they find on those occasions that their request is not granted, so that ultimately they are confirmed in their scepticism.

This class of objection, however, is much more an argument against a particular conception of prayer than a disproof of the principle that there is an Intelligence and a Goodness with whom one can either vocally or mentally hold communion. There is a profound difference between these two conceptions



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of prayer. The cruder conception is that man can persuade the Father to change His plans: that if man intercedes persistently enough God grants something which He would not otherwise have granted. The other conception is that of converse with Someone who is so intelligent and good that we gain a fresh vitality because we have tasted this intimate relationship with Him. We pray, in fact, primarily to create and express this relationship. We wish to be at one with Him, not in a dream-state, passively and subconsciously, but actively registering our co-operation. When we state our needs we do not do so because we are demanding satisfaction, nor because we are informing an Omniscient Deity of conditions about ourselves of which He was unaware. We are clearing our own minds, bringing our secret desires into the clear daylight, straightening out our aspirations, baring ourselves to the Infinite so that we may the better relate ourselves to the divine scheme, experimenting in self-analysis—not that our will and impulses may be subverted or suppressed but that they may be fashioned and directed and identified with the good purpose.

In Christian phraseology this process is expressed by the words 'Thy will be done'. In less theological and more symbolical language it is termed 'putting oneself in rhythm with the universe'.

The psychological value of prayer seems to me to be incalculable. If only because of this value I confess that I regard the abandonment of the

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praying habit as an immense loss to men and women of to-day. My secularist friends have sometimes urged that prayer is harmful, since it inculcates in people a false sense of dependency; 'you pray, and you leave God to do the rest'. 'You try to escape', they say, 'from your proper responsibilities.' It is true enough that the cruder conceptions of prayer may lead to that result: by leaving the decision to God, and then assuming that whatever happens is God's decision, we may become piously fatalistic. But that is not the design of Christian prayer. There can be no more vitalizing exercise than to plunge into the stream of life and swim with the stream, to co-operate with the design, to contribute to the cosmic aim. Prayer should stimulate this sense of co-operation.

The next best substitute is to discuss one's innermost needs or one's sacred plans with a human friend whom one can trust. To express oneself intimately to someone else and clear away the cobwebs of inhibitions and suppressions in such a conversation is occasionally possible. But, even then, odd little personal reactions, some slight disharmony of personalities, generally intrude and mar the sincerities. One is pulled up suddenly. Even the best of friends cannot be the complete *confidante*. In prayer there is no such discouragement, no suppressing influence. There is no human influence to interfere with us. It is the breathing in of pure air, for every door and window of one's self has been flung open. The queer

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imperfections, the disproportions of our worries, the foolishness of our fears, the meanness of our desires, take their true proportions, as we strip ourselves naked and expose our secret thoughts and emotions in this unbroken communion with the divine.

That is the ideal of prayer, giving thanks, admitting our imperfections, stating our needs to God, so that we may conform our will to God's will. Even if God never answered, it would be worth while. The religious claim, however, is that He does answer: not in any magical manner, not by sudden interventions in the sequence of events, but rather in the manifestation of that harmony which is possible between the divine (cosmic) and the human will, and in the strength which man derives from the realization of that harmony.

This sense of harmony is the special witness of the mystic. But it is not the monopoly of the mystic. It is an experience which awaits each man and woman who is prepared to try the experiment, not once or twice but continually—until, indeed, his desire to be at one with the universe has become a normal attitude of mind. Prayer, so conceived, is the attempt to express this desire for oneness and is thus lifted far above the level of religious controversy. Prayer could and should be the habitual mental language not only of professing Christians but of those who have formed no clear idea of God. For it is actually the affinity of man with the scheme

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of life, the recognition of his place in the unity of the whole. It defines his relationship with the universe. The mystic has become aware of this cosmic fellowship: prayer is the ordinary man's attempt to attain this fellowship.

We must not, however, avoid the problem of petitionary prayer, for such prayer preponderates heavily in Christian devotion and appears to be invited directly in Christ's teaching. The implication of His words is certainly that, given the conformity of such intercession with His will, requests will be answered. I suggest that we must link up the conception of petitionary prayer with that conception which I have already outlined. A man who regularly prays is vitalized by the growing consciousness of the unity between himself and God, of which he is capable. He begins to live, to direct the energy of his life in conformity with the rhythm of all life. Anxieties, pain, disappointments assume a new and lesser proportion. His will is strengthened. And it may be that because of this strengthening of will he has himself become a greater force and God is co-operating more fully through him. 'Ask and ye shall receive' is not a promise contradictory to this principle; it is rather an indication of unlimited human potentiality, once the individual has begun to align himself with the purpose of all life and the reality of unbroken companionship with God has illuminated his mind.

Nothing in modern life is more unfortunate than

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the confusion which has arisen as to the idea of prayer and the consequent disuse of the practice of prayer. Once prayer is rescued from the associations with which it has become popularly entangled, it will be seen to possess a profound significance. It becomes the vindication of all religion. It is the witness that when man conforms his will and opens the secret corners of his mind to the spirit of all life, he discovers in the universe a healing property. He reaches out into the silence and he does not find that it is void : he finds God.

### *Miracles as a Stumbling-block*

In turning to the next objection to Christianity we are passing from a fundamental to a more superficial issue. We become embroiled in a controversy which is not essentially relevant to religion. If, for example, it was proved beyond doubt that Christ did not come into human life through the medium of a Virgin Birth, nor rise in His human body from the grave, no orthodox Christian would be justified in abandoning his faith that Christ was divine. Conversely, if all the miracles were proved to be historical events, Christ's divinity would not thereby become established. Others beside Christ are said to have possessed the power to perform miracles. Miraculous claims are not a monopoly of divinity.

Miracles are usually regarded as a violation of the natural order ; yet, unless we know exactly how far

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the natural order extends, that definition is meaningless. A hundred years ago radio messages would have seemed to us to be a violation of the natural order; but we now know that wireless communication is a process which is operated entirely through natural laws. As man progresses in knowledge he is able to make use of forces which in earlier stages of his development were beyond his reach and imagination.

The contact of a higher with a lower type of being usually results in activities which to the lower being are relatively miraculous. Man, for instance, constantly interferes with the plant world: he can root up a plant, carry it overseas, and place it in Australian soil. If the plant could think, this transportation would certainly be described as a miracle, a supernatural disturbance of the order to which it was accustomed. On the same principle, therefore, if Christ was more than an ordinary man, we should expect to find that He would be able to control and make use of forces which are unknown to us.

It is important that we should not be tempted to regard miracles, when we are examining their claim, as occurrences which occupy a special department of their own. On the Christian theory they are no more the expression of divine activity than any regular everyday event. The divine authorship, on Christian principles, accounts for both.

To reject Christianity on the ground that its alleged miracles cannot be true is really to claim a

complete knowledge of the laws of the universe. We are justified in being critical, but we are never justified in a dogmatic refusal to admit that the miracles may have occurred. And it must be remembered that in this context we are not examining the *bona fides* of the New Testament miracles: we are merely considering whether such abnormal claims are sufficient reason for declaring that the Christian religion is untrustworthy. We cannot do so. For that type of extreme scepticism at once involves us in a denial of the experience of human history. Man's powers have not remained static: they have steadily extended. To set a limit beyond which they can extend no further, or to assert that a being greater than man could not perform certain acts is a standpoint which is incapable of rational defence.

That is a dangerous but very prevalent form of scepticism. When Mesmer commenced his experiments towards the close of the eighteenth century, he was regarded as an impostor by the scientists. He was turned out of Vienna as a charlatan. The Royal Academy of Medicine appointed two commissions to examine his work. The second of these reported favourably, and the report was consequently suppressed. Twelve years later (1837) the Academy appointed another committee, composed entirely of avowed antagonists of Mesmerism, and their report—which in effect said that Mesmerism was sheer humbug—was officially adopted.

There is not much to choose between those

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scientists and the Paduan monk who refused to look through Galileo's telescope lest he should have to refute his own dogmas. Nor does there seem to be much difference between this attitude and the standpoint of those who assume that all the alleged Christian miracles must be fairy-tales.



## CHAPTER IV

### *Materialism and Morals*

CHRISTIANITY is being challenged to-day as never before in its history. There is no doubt as to the identity of its protagonist. The attack is based, as we have seen, on that philosophical theory which we have called 'materialism'. It is reinforced by Behaviourist and other psychological theories. The materialist challenge to Christianity rests essentially upon the claim that man is no more than a machine. It maintains that his ideas of right and wrong and his belief that he has the power to discover truth are delusions. It is forced into the position of declaring that there is no such thing as objective truth, at least for practical purposes, since, even if man stumbled on the truth by chance, he would be estopped from recognizing it. Man thinks and believes only as certain chemical functions or irrational impulses dictate.

This challenge to Christianity is therefore a challenge to reason. It dethrones reason by declaring it to be an illusion. This revolt from reason is a formidable feature of the twentieth century, and it is worth while re-emphasizing its nature, because as we have seen, the materialists of to-day delight to tell us that Christianity is the enemy of reason and that it is they who are the apostles of enlighten

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ment. We shall not be deceived by that statement. Even if we have failed to realize that Christianity is eminently reasonable, we shall at least recognize that its antagonists are the irrationalists. And if we value reason, and believe that life is reduced to a nightmare if there is no such thing as truth, we shall regard this theory as a monstrous distortion of reality: we shall see the materialist anti-Christians, not as apostles of enlightenment, but as men whose minds have become so confused that they are presenting us with a phantasy; and not, as we discover when we observe how it works out in practice, a very pleasant phantasy.

In practical affairs, in the sphere of political action, this revolt from reason works out in its extreme form in Nazism, and to a less complete extent in Marxian Communism. It is the phenomenon of Nazism which has caused that arch-critic of Christianity, Bertrand Russell, to admit that he finds he has more of the Christian in his outlook than he had previously suspected.\*

### *Materialist Nazism*

Nazism is quite consistent. Based on the revolt from reason, it uses force and not persuasion. It substitutes will for knowing, and power for happiness. As there is no objective truth, truth becomes what authority orders you to believe. "Education for Germans," writes one of the Nazi apostles, "must

\* Address at the Fabian Society, October 25, 1934.

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destroy freedom of will." This is the direct opposite of the rational standpoint, which claims that persuasion rather than force must be the means of imparting truth; rationalism, moreover, assumes also that an intelligent man will use only those arguments which he himself believes to be true.

If, on the Nazi principle, you must work by force someone must use the force. The revolt from reason accordingly takes the political form of a nationalistic aristocracy, for the man who argues that the elect should rule the earth always goes on to proclaim that he is one of the elect. The German, therefore, presents himself as the pure Aryan, the perfect man, born to conquer and control the barbarian races.

It is obviously impossible to reason with people who hold that force is preferable to reason, that war is a manly exercise, that woman's duty is to give birth to baby warriors, and that truth is not objective reality but that doctrine which the aristocracy orders people to believe; but it is possible to argue whether Nazi Germans are the elect.

If the world were converted to the creed of Nazism it would follow that every nation would maintain that it was the chosen race, and therefore an existence of perpetual conflict would be inevitable. The test of racial superiority would be that of military efficiency. The nation which could most completely exterminate by poison gas the civilian population of its opponents would have established its claim to be the perfect aristocracy.

*Materialist Communism*

Communism also preaches the necessity of force; the capitalist order is to be overthrown by force. Communism is an expression of materialist irrationalism in several of its features. Marx, as we have seen, maintains that events are the cause of ideas, that ideas are not mental creation but are promoted by economic circumstances. The Communist Party in Russia is the elect, and the capitalist is to be crushed mercilessly. Mercy and humility are, in fact, bourgeois vices. There is to be no freedom of judgment, no rights of the individual to search for and to maintain truth. Truth for the materialist Communist, as for the Nazi, is simply that which the absolutist State decrees.

"The individual is a means, not an end," says the Nazi gospel; "Man is a creature on whom experiments must be made." The Communist agrees, at least so far as the capitalist is concerned. An individual has no rights as such. Any rights he enjoys are due not to his existence as an individual but to the fact that he is a member of the body of the elect.

Nevertheless it is Nazism, not Communism, which is materialism in its nakedness. Communism possesses many alleviating features. Its ideal is international not racial exclusiveness; and therefore it would make for world peace rather than war. It is prepared to give liberty and to withdraw force

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once everyone is proletariat and the transitional, revolutionary period is over. The Nazi would probably plead the same thing; but his purpose is different, since he is the creature of the privileged classes and therefore must maintain private ownership and a servile class. The Communist, equally with the Socialist, is aiming at a classless, non-profit-making civilization; the Nazi is aiming at something very different.

Communism, as we have seen, differs from Socialism as to the means by which it proposes to introduce the new social and economic order. It differs also from non-Marxian Socialism in so far as it expresses the materialist philosophy; but its materialism cannot be said to be an inherent feature, for there is nothing in the system which it seeks eventually to construct incompatible with Christian principles. Indeed, as we know, the early Christians attempted to form a Communist society, and the religious orders of the Catholic Church are Communist organizations.

### *The Value of Modern Thought*

It is fatally easy to react from these irrationalist developments to such a degree that we condemn all modern thought *in toto*. Yet the Behaviourist and the other psychological explanations of our make-up, and the Marxian dialectical interpretation of history, have their uses. They contain truth, but they are not the whole truth. They have reminded us that

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man is not quite so rational as Victorian Liberals supposed. It is important that we should realize this. Modern psychology, moreover, promises to provide incalculable reforms in education and in industrial environment. It is only when these scientific theories are expressed in a completely materialist setting that they become disastrous. They need the rationalizing and spiritual counter-balance of religion.

### *Sex Morals*

We shall see this more clearly, perhaps, if we turn to the field of sexual morals. The influence here may seem at first sight to be conflicting and confused, for the overthrow of democracy and the substitution of dictatorial authoritarianism, as in the Nazi form of materialism, has been coloured with a certain Puritan streak. Where you have a system of militarized ideas, an element of puritanizing reform is likely to creep in. Physical fitness, in the eyes of the political materialist, is essential; and excessive sexual irregularities are frowned upon for this reason.

On the other hand, materialist psychology inevitably encourages freedom of sexual expression. We shall have to be careful, as we examine sex problems, that we do not allow our own prejudices to run away with us. Many orthodox religious people become so indignant over sex freedom that they cannot take an impartial view. Similarly, many anti-Christians are so bitter about Christian morals that they refuse to listen to any attempted defence of religion.

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The sex instinct lies so deep in all our natures that we find it hard to view sex morality impersonally.

Undoubtedly 'modern thought' has let in a draught of fresh air where sex morals are concerned. Victorian morality, with its standard of modesty and its excessive restraints, was responsible for an unhealthy hot-house atmosphere. Many people were starved sexually, consequently becoming narrow and cruel in their opinions; and, unfortunately, it was these kind of people, on the whole, who maintained the code and set the conventions. Victorian society, in fact, created a network of sexual taboos which created a great deal of misery. The Victorian was bound by chains, and the chains were of his own making. A person who so binds himself and is shocked by any attempts to break free is not necessarily pure.

Because people are horrified by sexual irregularities and are vigorously disciplinarian in preventing them, it does not necessarily mean that their minds are clean; indeed, prudishness is usually a symptom of something which is the very reverse of purity.

The Victorian attitude towards sex revealed unmistakably unwholesome tendencies. The doctrine that sex expression outside marriage was the deadliest of sins led people to regard the sex-act as something rather disgusting in itself. But the sexual impulse suppressed in one direction found an outlet in another. This extreme insistence on the unforgivable nature of sex experience outside marriage

demanding an antidote: the theory accordingly arose that within the married state everything is lawful, and many a Victorian home consequently became the scene of silent domestic tragedy.

This tradition has so entirely disappeared that we probably regard it much as we regard instruments of torture in a museum. The tradition has little relevance for us. It seems to us incredible and almost insane that people should have blushed to talk in the drawing-room about sex, and should have merely sniggered at it in the dining-room after a glass of port. We are amazed that polite society should have ostracized an unmarried mother, or that a man with homo-sexual tendencies should have been sent to penal servitude. For young people to be genuine in their sex talk and sex conduct appears to most people to be simply a return to normal common sense. The fatal flaw, indeed, in the Victorian scheme of propriety lay in the disunity, and therefore the conflict of motive, which it provoked. Outwardly the Victorian, if unmarried, pretended to be abstemious, and in marriage the intimacies were shrouded in secrecy. Inwardly he either indulged in sexual irregularities or in unfulfilled sexual phantasies, and was frequently a victim of harrowing remorse because of his belief that these indulgences were hideously vicious.

But merely to react from Victorian repressions is not enough. In any form of civilization society must have a moral standard in sexual as well as in other



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modes of behaviour. The weakness of the contemporary attitude towards sex is that that attitude does not reflect any constructive ideal. At least, that is the impression I get from talking to my younger friends; they do not quite know where they are, so far as the sexual ethic is concerned. It looms before them as a troublesome mystery to which they have not yet discovered the key. They are quite clear that the Victorian code was unsatisfactory and that there was something rather nasty and unwholesome in its disciplinary conventions and professions of purity. It is obvious that we must not be enslaved by those sort of repressions, and that we must be genuine about an influence which so deeply colours all our personal experience. But this reaction is not in itself sufficient.

As we have seen, we are now offered the materialist psychological doctrine that we should not hesitate to express our sexual impulses in physical acts. Provided that you find a girl who is willing, you should go to bed with her whenever you feel inclined. The materialist doctrine involves only two qualifications, that we should not express ourselves sexually to excess, and that our sex-conduct should not be anti-social. The first qualification is obvious enough, but the second is hardly satisfactory. For who is to decide what is anti-social? It is anti-social to commit rape or to victimize young children; no civilized State could tolerate such offences. But is homosexual practice, for instance, anti-social? Homo-

sexual addicts would not agree that it is. And if we reply that the majority must decide, that 'anti-social' implies whatever offends the conscience of the majority, we are driven back on the original question as to what principle is to guide the conscience of the majority. It is no use trying to limit the meaning of anti-social acts to those acts which definitely conflict with the interests of the community; for that interpretation will depend on the state of public conscience or opinion. Would exhibitionism, for example, be anti-social on that test? Would it be anti-social for two people to have sexual connection in a public street? The answer would depend entirely on the public conscience or taste, and the question would still be unanswered as to how that conscience or taste should be formed.

Nor is the doctrine of free-love or self-expression in itself a constructive moral principle. It is merely the line of non-resistance: the impulses are to dictate, and we are to follow our impulses. It is an automatic course of action, like smoking a cigarette whenever we feel inclined to do so, rather than rationally guided action. We shall have to find a more satisfactory principle than that to which to refer our code of sexual behaviour.

I do not suggest that if 'free-love' became the universal standard, society would become more sexed than it is at present: men and women do not necessarily carry sex expression to excess because they are free to do so. But the sex morals of such a society

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would inevitably become more animal in nature. For if the sexual functions were to be indulged in any passing infatuation, sex would become much more a familiar incident, devoid of spiritual or romantic significance, than a rare and precious experience. It would approximate precisely to animal behaviour. That has always seemed to me to be the fatal flaw of the libertine gospel when applied to practice.

We are, however, already on the track of the principle we are seeking when we decide that the old tradition was wrong in regarding the sex-act as sinful and unclean. We now regard the sex-act as pure and natural. From that emerges the principle that something which is pure and natural, which is linked so closely to the affections, and which is the means of the supreme act of procreation, is sacred; and if it is sacred, it should be reserved for sacred occasions. It ought not to be squandered on chance encounters. If we follow this line of thought further, we shall begin to draw a sharp distinction between passionate infatuation and love. The difference is that passion is temporary in character and very quickly tends to die down into indifference or even aversion: it is intense enough, but it is not in itself love. The seal of love is its mental and emotional intimacy: that is to say, if I am really in love, I desire comradeship with my partner in the platonic adventures of life, I link my sexual desire to a desire for sharing intellectual and domestic and other

experiences. The mark of love is a desire for permanency: the mark of passion without love is that it is a temporary relationship.

The older orthodoxy has always insisted on the vow, and the ceremony which is witness of the vow, as the essential element in the marriage union. Thus, even if a union is permanent and the consummation of genuine love, it has been regarded as immoral if no ceremony has been performed. Conversely, marriages which on ethical grounds may have been a travesty of Christian ideals, are binding and indissoluble because they have been celebrated in church. I suspect that, when a new moral standard emerges, the emphasis will be laid much more upon love as the vital factor—love as distinguished from temporary infatuation. If so, the original Christian doctrine that the consent and not the ceremony makes the marriage will not be abandoned: it will receive a fuller application. But this test will probably be applied unreservedly. Wherever there is mutual love, the union and the sex-act are likely to be countenanced by the new morality.

I do not pretend that these general theoretical principles are sufficient to solve all sex problems in practice. If I were to assume that one can prescribe a rule which will apply satisfactorily to every individual relationship, I should be guilty of a bland and irritating dogmatism. Human conduct is far too devious to submit to such simple remedies. The question of divorce, for example, has not been

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discussed. And there are other complicated situations arising out of the claims of extreme possessiveness and also of an innate tendency to promiscuity. Advice in such cases could only be offered by private conversation or correspondence : these personal problems do not lend themselves to consideration in a book which is merely an outline. But none of these difficulties prove that the general principle is faulty. A moral principle is an ideal, something which, if it is true, should be the compass by which we reckon the direction of our moral behaviour. It cannot presume to apply to the entanglements of all personal relationships.

### *Is the Family to Go ?*

The libertine tendency is carried in some quarters, however, to a much more destructive extent. The family is to go. It is not in communist Russia, as many people suppose, that we hear this gospel preached, but in capitalist America. I have quoted elsewhere\* some of the sentimentalist effusions from across the Atlantic on this subject. Many of them are written in excruciatingly bad American, but their gist is the same. The natural parents are to leave their babies on the doorstep of the communal establishment, so that they may be handed over to the mercies of State-paid nurses and governesses.

Once again we must not allow ourselves to forget that reactionary proposals usually have some justifi-

\* *Modern Thought on Trial* (Philip Allan).

cation; they reflect abuses in the system they seek to destroy. Victorian domesticity has often been a narrowing and tiresome tyranny. The petty conservatism of suburbia is a symptom of over-domesticity. The tradition that even distant relatives have a right to claim family privilege has led to the notion that one successful member is under an obligation to support all his ne'er-do-well brothers and sisters and aunts and cousins. Parents have had children far too much at their mercy, and the boarding-school system has, in this respect at least, proved a blessing. For many parents have little idea as to how to educate their children; they have either spoiled them, inundated them with their own religious and social prejudices, bullied or neglected them, nagged them, suppressed them, or done their best to turn them into little editions of themselves.

But one would have thought that the proper remedy for this was to reform the home, and gradually to train a generation of parents who will know how to treat their children intelligently. It seems difficult to conceive a satisfactory social substitute for the Christian idea of the family. An intelligently good home is the happiest of all environments. The prospect of communal domestic establishments is not alluring, apart altogether from the encouragement to couples to have babies and then neglect them. For it seems clear that such a system would reproduce the very feature which critics complain of in public schools: it would tend to mould children

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into a uniform type. The disappearance of the family as a unit would take us far towards the production of a mechanized, automatic society. The reform of the family system rather than its destruction seems to be the true ideal towards which rational progressionists must aim.

## CHAPTER V

### *Differences Between a Materialist and a Christian Civilization*

IN previous chapters we have been concerned with the question whether the religious interpretation of life is true, or whether its claim is so false or dubious that we are reduced to the materialist conception and must adjust our ideas to that more confined horizon.

We must now pass to a final consideration of the differences between a Christian and a materialist civilization in practice, tracing the consequences of the rival theories. If we agree that these practical differences are important, the second section of this book will have to some extent justified itself, for my aim throughout has been to insist that this is not merely an academic issue. If the coming civilization is based on a complete overthrow of the Christian tradition and a substitution of the materialist creed, its entire nature will be affected. And we, or our children, who are to function in that civilization, will be concerned even to the intimate details of our personal lives.

#### *The Materialist State will be Authoritarian*

The first distinctive contribution of materialism is, as we have seen, the doctrine of irrationalism: man



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has no reasoning mind, but is driven as his organism or desires dictate. It follows that there is no value in allowing man liberty of thought. There is indeed no reality in liberty of thought. Man is a machine, and his mental processes must be directed as the State decides.

Those of us who have any doubt that a materialist State would be authoritarian in character should turn their attention to Nazi Germany or atheist Russia. In neither of these countries has the citizen any freedom to express his dissent from the orthodoxies of authority: the concentration camp is the goal of any such outlets for mental energy. The citizen must believe and do what the State orders. This is an inevitable policy. The materialist State on its own principles is entitled to crush out any individual heresies which may interfere with corporate efficiency.

The State must insist on its orthodoxies, and its method of propaganda will not be that of persuasion, for persuasion is meaningless if man possesses no reasoning faculty. Force becomes the medium. Unity of aim is essential in the efficient State and uniformity of idea is the simplest means of securing unity.

In the case both of Nazi Germany and Communist Russia it will be contended that the present rigid restrictions upon freedom of opinion is a transitional policy: when the State is so firmly established that no counter-revolutionary activities are to be feared, these restrictions may be relaxed. History teaches,

### *Differences Between Materialist and Christian Civilization*

however, that once an autocrat is in the saddle he does not voluntarily abdicate his powers. The revolt from reason which is the mark of modern materialism is not likely to allow liberty for the exercise of the very faculty which it discounts.

The objection will no doubt be raised that Christian States have hardly been conspicuous for their tolerance of freedom. The Holy Inquisition laid a trail of human cruelty as ferocious as any savage terrorism, and most Christian bodies, Protestant as well as Catholic, have ugly records in their cupboard. The answer to this charge is that we have never yet seen a Christian civilization or a Christian State. Nations have perverted Christianity to their own ends, but they have never applied it. Moreover, we must remember that materialism is true to its principles when it creates the tyrannical State. Christianity is true to its principles only if it allows liberty of thought to pagan, agnostic, or heretic, relying on rational persuasion and abjuring all violent aids to conversion.

### *Can the Materialist State be Humanitarian?*

The moment that man is regarded as a machine rather than a reasoning animal, his status as an individual becomes seriously affected. He is needed as a worker, but his individuality *per se* entitles him to no rights. The materialist State will educate him when he is too young to work, and pension him when he is too ill or old to work. It will strive to provide

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the opportunity of material happiness for the greatest number. But the purpose behind such humanitarian policy is to ensure that each citizen shall be a capable worker : a man works better when he is contented and knows that he will be rewarded for past services.

Logically, no doubt, a materialist State should cease to support a citizen who has become an encumbrance to the community. But it will probably remain inconsistent in this respect. When a man's wife or mother is suffering from an incurable disease, it will, for the same reasons, supply her with medical assistance. A citizen, however deeply imbued with materialist doctrine, will minister to her, for, if he is fond of his mother, he will find pleasure in attending her sick-bed. But let us suppose it is the proverbial mother-in-law who is ailing. Let us suppose that she is an irritating, unpleasant person, without any claims on other relatives or friends. What guarantee is there that she will receive any sort of help, or even that she will be allowed to live?

On Christian principles the recalcitrant worker, the useless citizen, the rebel, the alien, even the proverbial mother-in-law, have sacred rights, not because of their capacity for service but because they are immortal souls. However uncongenial their society, they must be cared for because they are children of God. Once this fundamental valuation is rejected, the consequences are likely to be far-reaching. The religious claim is a guarantee of indi-

### *Differences Between Materialist and Christian Civilization*

vidual rights and of literal humanitarianism. That the materialist creed offers no such guarantee may be seen when we consider the treatment of the kulaks in Russia and of the poorer Jews in Germany.

### *Civilization Must Have an Ideal*

The issue between religion and materialism is largely an issue between idealism and utilitarianism. Yet we must not suppose that a materialist civilization is bereft of ideals. In its earlier stages it is inspired by the ideal of creating the efficient State and of providing its citizens with opportunities for material happiness. No visitor to Russia can fail to see that faith in this ideal is reflected in the very faces of the workers. The Five-Year Plan is an ideal which arouses enthusiasm of an almost religious nature. How is it possible, then, to contrast materialism with idealism?

The answer is important, for, I suspect, it illustrated one of the main differences between the two forms of civilization. Let us examine it more closely.

### *A Materialist Civilization will become Static*

The ideal which animates a materialist civilization is of a strictly finite character. Once the ground has been cleared by abolishing a profit-making system, it will be comparatively easy to create an efficient State and an order in which the opportunity for material happiness is within the reach of all. The

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difficulties which remain will be those of organization. But once the organization has been set up, and humanity has become sane enough to arrange its international affairs so as to ensure a reasonable security against war, the task will be far from insuperable. The new order will probably be created in a remarkably short space of time. And it is then that the test begins. For what further ideal is materialism to hold out to humanity? What new purpose will the community be inspired to fulfil?

There will be, of course, the scientific urge. There is the immense and endless labour of exterminating disease, of improving physical health, and probably of extending the span of individual life. But this is a mission which concerns only a small section of the race. The community as a whole cannot devote its energy to scientific research: it can only enjoy the benefits which scientists confer.

There is also continual progress to be made in raising the general level of intelligence by improved educational methods. But this object is not a sufficient ideal in itself to stir the community to fresh effort. Something must drive them to desire greater knowledge—assuming that the existence of objective truth is admitted—as also to improve the national stamina by eugenic reforms. If social conditions have already been made comfortable and the hours of work are reduced by mechanical devices, it is difficult to see what will be the stimulus which will excite them to further efficiency.

### *Differences Between Materialist and Christian Civilization*

A materialist civilization, after the first two or three generations, after the pioneer period, tends accordingly to become conservative. It will have achieved what it set out to do. It will rest on its laurels; in other words, it will deteriorate. For human society cannot stand still; if it is not striving to advance, it falls back. And, once the goal is reached, there is nothing in the materialist gospel to counteract this fatal tendency.

### *The Ideals of Religion*

This is the profound difference between the efficient State and the Kingdom of Heaven. For heaven belongs to the infinite, whereas the ideals of materialism are confined to the finite world and are quickly exhausted. From a Christian standpoint efficiency and material happiness are not ends but means—means to the creation of a good society, the individuals of which are seeking nothing less than perfection. Perfection is never attained; it stretches always beyond the horizon. But that is the essential condition of an idealism which is to rouse men to perpetual effort.

Such an idealism means God. We must not allow ourselves to become confused or prejudiced by doctrinal niceties about God. An infinite ideal which is real, and because it is real, arouses our devotion and enthusiasm, can be nothing less than God. But the ideal, though infinite and inexhaustible, must not lie beyond human reach. It must not be wholly

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impracticable. God must be in the sky, but He must also, as Christ, be incarnate in the world.

### *The Effect of Materialist Pessimism*

Obviously it is essential that the ideal should exist in reality. No one can be inspired by an ideal in which he does not believe. That is why it has been necessary for us to inquire whether faith in the existence of God is rational or illusory. You will have already drawn your conclusions as to whether the materialist explanation can reconcile itself with the phenomenon of mind. You will have weighed the fact that mind is continually disturbing the activity of the physical universe, that it initiates physical activity, whether in trivial instances like throwing a stone into the air, or in more ambitious schemes like the acquisition of dry land by damming the Zuyder Zee. You will have appreciated that this means that the physical world is not a closed system, but that it is invaded by the element of mind, that it is so constructed as to admit this invasion by intelligent purpose. You will have asked yourself whether you believe that the universe is a unity and a good unity. And if you have decided that it is a bad unity, or a chaos—in other words, if you believe that there is no God—you will be faced with a situation which is not likely to stimulate man to do more than make the best of a bad business, to create as comfortable a social order as possible, but to leave it there.

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It is not an inspiring prospect. A brief span of life—even if it can be slightly prolonged—will be too brief to allow the individual to feel that he has satisfactorily completed his purpose. The eventual extinction of the human race and all its achievements is not an encouraging situation. I do not suggest that there are none who will continue to give their best efforts: the true artist, the scientist, the social reformer will not be silenced by materialist despair. But for the ordinary man materialism provides no impetus beyond the concerns of social organization. Pessimism may incite heroism, but it can only discourage enthusiasm.

### *Communism Cannot Make People Good*

Moreover, the uglier strands in human nature, which under the capitalist system have expressed themselves in the acquisition of wealth and exploitation, will remain. The mere establishment of a communist society will not cure them. All that will happen is that they will no longer be able to find their outlet in piling up vast profits and ownership of land and machinery. The direction of such activities will be changed, but there will still remain the opportunities for the seizure of power and influence, for trickery and tyranny. If we think that Socialist organization can provide entirely against these tendencies, it means that we really believe that men can be made good by Act of Parliament. But you cannot change



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motives by legislation, and it is motives which matter.

The creation of a free community is a noble ideal, but it can only be effectual if it is coloured by love of one's neighbour. And love of one's neighbour can come only from a spiritual source. Ultimately there can be no love of neighbour without the sense of a love of God.

The essential idealism must be linked on to something far higher than the kingdom of this world. "Man cannot meet his own deepest need," says the Archbishop of York,\* "nor find for himself release from his profoundest trouble. What he needs is not progress but redemption."

#### *The New Civilization as an Environment for Christianity*

We have seen Christianity distorted and perverted by human agency. But we have never seen a Christian nation. If we have any doubt of this, we have only to turn back to the recorded words and account of the life of Christ, and then compare them with Christian history.

And this brings us to a realization of the unique possibilities of the present moment. I have pleaded that, for its own sake, the coming civilization should be Christian and not materialist in character. But we can press the case further. The new civilization might present for the first time an opportunity for an unadulterated Christianity to function. In a class-

\* *Nature, Man and God*, by Dr. William Temple.

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less and eventually moneyless society we might be able at last to construct a Christian world. If class privilege and poverty were to give way to community, the warfare of trade competition to co-operation, the chaos of national sovereignty to international order, we should have cleared away much of the debris which has vitiated and obstructed Christian ideals in the past. If the forest is cleared, and the swamps are drained, and the soil is purified, the seed of Christianity might for the first time take root.

### *Are the Present Forms of Christianity Equal to Their Task?*

When we turn our attention to the general body of orthodox Christians and ask whether they are capable of performing this immense task of carrying over and applying to the new civilization the principles of Christ's gospel, we may be moved to despair. It may seem that the Church represents a closed circle and is never again likely to be a predominating spiritual influence in national affairs.

However unfavourable may be our general impressions, we shall not have failed to notice that the Christian bodies are in a healthier and purer condition than they were when Christianity was a convention and a man had to qualify for secular offices by professing belief in the established forms of religion. The Church has benefited by her loss of power. She is more critical of herself, more energetically alive to the need of internal reform. No one who has any acquaintance with ecclesiastical

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circles can doubt that in those circles there are signs of a purging of heart, a much more virile discontent with denominational deficiencies, a genuine attempt to carry out constructive reforms.

This change of heart may have come too late. In secular as well as ecclesiastical history, reforms have frequently come too late. It may be that the breach between the world and institutional religion yawns so deep that reconciliation is no longer feasible. Probably you cannot bring yourself to imagine that, however Christian an outlook the new civilization might adopt, people will begin once more to subscribe to the creeds, or postpone their Sunday excursion into the country until they have attended Morning Service. All the machinery of observance which conformity to orthodoxy entails seems to you to belong to a past tradition, a tradition to which the mass of people will never again return. And what causes you to despair of the orthodox mentality is that it can only conceive of a return to Christianity in that form. You suspect that in the eyes of the Churchman a Christian revival means nothing else than a revival of the old paraphernalia, that he has not the imagination to look beyond his Sunday Schools and choir practices and regular parochial routine, so as to conceive that a Christian revival might express itself through some entirely different medium.

Let us assume that your impressions are justified. The only comment I have made upon them has been

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to emphasize that the crucial issue, the real dividing line, is not between conforming Christians and all those who do not conform; it is between those who accept, however exactly or however vaguely, the principles for which Christ stands and those whose gospel is materialism. Already we are forced, whether we are orthodox or unorthodox, to realize that this clear-cut issue is arising, that this alternative is the sheer naked reality, and that the smaller controversies, however comparatively necessary they may be, are taking on much less significant proportions.

It follows from this that in the coming struggle, and in the age which follows that struggle, the conception of Christianity will have to be more elastic than hitherto. If Christianity is not merely to be a loose individual relationship, if it is to have any corporate expression, not only its conceptions but its organization must be more elastic. The Church may come to see the advisability of grades of membership within her own fold. We might envisage an inner circle of those who are true to the older traditions and who continue to take their part in the liturgical and devotional culture which the Church has perpetuated through the ages. But somehow—and it is not at all an impossible conception—there must be outer circles.

If there is no place for the 'unattached' outsider in the organization, the Church will have lost her opportunity. But let me hasten to assure any orthodox critic, into whose hands this little book happens to

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have fallen, that this is not a vision of a watery, compromised Christianity, an abandonment of principles on an ultra-latitudinarian policy; it is a vision which provides for the survival of an unyielding orthodoxy: the inner circles remain intact. It is a vision, however, which recognizes that there is a vast body of those who are Christian in heart but are not Christian in profession; and it claims that the corporate expression of religion must be extended to include them. As the consequences of the materialist outlook become more evident, the number of these is likely to be largely increased. Others, besides Bertrand Russell, will come to appreciate that their outlook is more Christian than they had supposed.

### *The Need of a Crusade*

Some readers will criticize me for having introduced into this book a defence of religious principles. They will urge that these philosophical issues do not blend with a cursory inquiry into coming economic and social changes. They will be impatient with me for having devoted so much space to the question whether Christianity is to permeate the new order of civilization or is to be abandoned.

But not all, I think, will take the side of these critics, for they will have realized that the fate of the new civilization depends largely on its adoption or rejection of Christian ideals. I have suggested that an efficient State is not worth while unless the spiritual values of life are its corner-stone. The new

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civilization must be founded on the gospel of love, of peace and goodwill among men, if it is to be an advance on the old order. And, to lay this foundation, men must believe that these ideals possess the sanction of reality, that the higher values are an integral part of the design of the universe.

The materialistic attack on religion is an invitation to the human race to commit intellectual suicide. We are in the presence to-day of a campaign against reason more formidable than any previous irrationalist movement. It is a formidable danger, for the revolt from reason can claim a considerable amount of scientific authority. And, on the other hand, religion, which is the antidote to irrationalism, has lost the allegiance of a large portion of the community, since men identify it with institutional Christianity. They have not seriously considered the credentials of Christianity. They do not conceive that Christianity is greater than the forms in which it is expressed, that it might take other forms, that the Spirit of God might choose strange channels for His revelation, that, for example, Christianity might be reborn in so unlikely a Bethlehem as Russian Communism.

The new order is doomed if it is handed over to men whose minds are clouded by the bleak despair of materialist nihilism. That is why those who believe in the possibility of a better order, instead of regarding the issue between religion and materialism as academic, are convinced that the new order must be

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inspired by religious faith. If I were able to do so, I should form the modern equivalent of an order of friars. We should wear a habit—a sweater and a pair of grey flannel trousers. We should go into the cities and countryside preaching our message—our message that the new order is coming, that we can help to make it either a heaven or a hell, and that the issue as to whether it will be heaven or hell turns upon whether it preserves and realizes the Christian ideals or rejects them. Some of us would enter churches and preach from the pulpit—if we were invited to do so. Others would speak at street-corners and on village greens. Others would talk over a glass of beer in pubs, and others, again, would hold forth in halls and in lecture-rooms. The need of such a mission should be obvious, for complacency, a willingness to drift, a total failure to appreciate how near we are to the eve of great social and economic changes are widespread tendencies in the present generation of easy-going Englishmen.

People must be stirred from their apathy. It is because of general apathy that tyrannic and unrepresentative minorities are able to seize the reins. And then, too late, the community wake up to find that they have become enslaved.

I began this small book by suggesting that the majority of people are not directly concerned with political controversies. They are not likely, therefore, to become entangled in disputes as to the details of the Labour or any other party programme. They are

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not likely to be side-tracked by the propagandist who will attempt to wrangle with them as to the merits or demerits of Socialism. It is to such an audience that I have made my appeal. Their task is to calculate the nature of the coming order, to discuss fundamental realities rather than preferential theories, and to avoid sectarian labels.

Similarly, we must not be tricked into the assumption that Christianity is a concern only of ruri-deccanal conferences or theological colleges. We shall dissociate it in our minds from a sentimentality with a parsonic flavour. The claims which it makes are so radical that they affect our own most intimate relationships. Its success or failure in permeating the new order will have a secular and practical as well as a religious and intellectual significance. In a play, recently produced in London by a Sunday evening society, a revolution breaks out in a German town and a small body of policemen are taken prisoners. The military revolutionary leader is an idealist and wishes to spare their lives. The professional revolutionary insists that they must be shot, and contends that to imagine that mercy should be shown to them is a stupid bourgeois conceit. That is not perhaps an inappropriate illustration of the issues involved. Let it and its moral serve as the *finale* to the journey of exploration which we have taken together.

And if you are prepared on your own account to take a further journey, if you think it worth while to preach the gospel of Christian values and to stir



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your fellow-countrymen from their apathy, then you will have begun as great a work as any man or woman could undertake. You will be responding to a cause which is not only of vital significance but is one in the service of which you yourself are urgently needed. For the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.

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